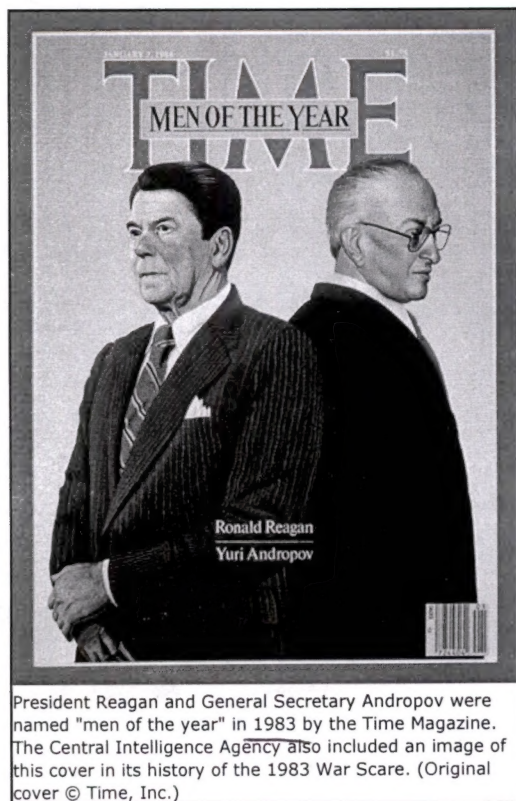


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The 1983 War Scare: "The Last Paroxysm" of the Cold War Part I

Soviet "Huffing and Puffing?" "Crying Wolf?" "Rattling Pots and Pans?" or "A Real Worry That We Could Come into Conflict through Miscalculation?"

Largest On-Line Set of Primary Sources on "The Last Paroxysm" of the Cold War Suggests ... Both

National Security Archive Electronic Briefing Book No. 426

PART 1 OF 3 POSTINGS

Posted – May 16, 2013

**Edited by Nate Jones
Assisted by Lauren Harper
With Document Contributions from Svetlana Savranskaya**

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Washington, D.C., May 16, 2013 – Soviet General Secretary Yuri Andropov warned US envoy Averell Harriman that the Reagan administration's provocations were moving the two superpowers toward "the dangerous 'red line'" of nuclear war through "miscalculation" in June of 1983. Andropov delivered this warning six months before the 1983 "War Scare" reached its crux during the NATO nuclear release exercise named Able Archer 83, according to Harriman's notes of the conversation posted for the first time today by the National Security Archive (www.nsarchive.org).

The meeting provides important, first-hand evidence of Soviet leadership concerns about a possible US threat. But other documents included in this posting suggest that not all Soviet political and military leaders were fearful of a US preemptive first strike, but may rather have been "rattling their pots and pans" in an attempt to gain geopolitical advantages, including stopping the deployment of Pershing II and Cruise nuclear missiles in Western Europe. "This would not be the first time that Soviet

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leaders have used international tensions to mobilize their populations," wrote the acting CIA director John McMahon in a declassified memo from early 1984.

President Reagan zeroed in on the essence of this debate in March of 1984 when he asked his ambassador to the Soviet Union, Arthur Hartman, "Do you think Soviet leaders really fear us, or is all the huffing and puffing just part of their

propaganda?" The evidence presented here, and in two forthcoming electronic briefing books in this series, suggests that the answer to the president's question was "both."

This first of three "War Scare" postings also includes KGB reports corroborating the creation of Operation RYAN, the largest peace-time intelligence gathering operation in history, to "prevent the possible sudden outbreak of war by the enemy;" a newly declassified CIA *Studies in Intelligence* article concluding that Soviet fears of a preemptive U.S. nuclear strike, "while exaggerated, were scarcely insane;" and declassified backchannel discussions between Reagan advisor Jack Matlock and Soviet sources who warned of "growing paranoia among Soviet officials," whom the source described as "literally obsessed by fear of war."

The documents in this series provide new information and add nuance to the ongoing debate over the significance — some even argue, the existence — of a genuine war scare in the Soviet Union. The documents come from Freedom of Information Act releases by the CIA and U.S. Defense Department, research findings from American archives, as well as formerly classified Soviet Politburo and KGB files, interviews with ex-Soviet generals, and records from other former communist states.

The next electronic briefing book in the series will examine the exercises Autumn Forge 83, Reforger 83, and Able Archer 83, using NATO, U.S. Air Force, and other documents. The third posting will chronicle the U.S. intelligence community's evolving understanding of and debate over the 1983 War Scare.

* * *

"Do you think Soviet leaders really fear us, or is all the huffing and puffing just part of their propaganda?" President Reagan asked his Ambassador to the Soviet Union,

War Scare, Part 1



Nate Jones describes the War Scare, and how it got him interested in the Freedom of Information Act.

Arthur Hartman in early 1984, according to declassified talking points from the Reagan Presidential Library. President Reagan had pinpointed the question central to the 1983 War Scare. That question was key to the real-time intelligence reporting, the retroactive intelligence estimates and analyses of the danger, and it remains the focus of today's continuing debate over the danger and lessons of the so-called "Able Archer" War Scare.

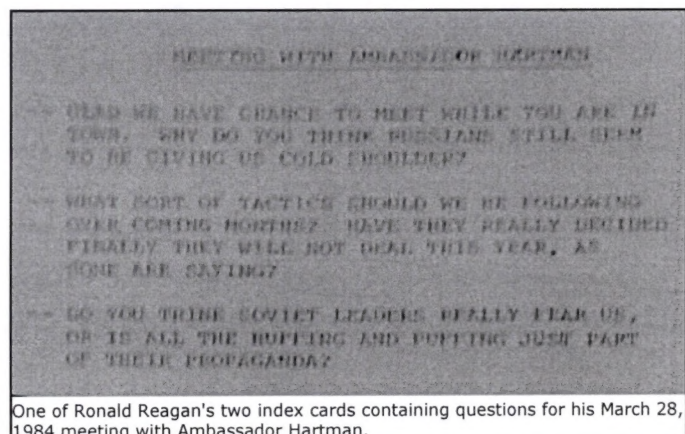
Some, such as Robert Gates, who was the CIA's deputy director for intelligence during the War Scare, have concluded, "After going through the experience at the time, then through the postmortems, and now through the documents, I don't think the Soviets were crying wolf. They may not have believed a NATO attack was imminent in November 1983, but they did seem to believe that the situation was very dangerous."^[1] Others, such as the CIA's national intelligence officer for the Soviet Union, Fritz Ermarth, wrote in the CIA's first analysis of the War Scare, and still believes today, that because the CIA had "many [Soviet] military cook books" it could "judge confidently the difference between when they might be brewing up for a real military confrontation or ... just rattling their pots and pans."^[2]

"Huffing and puffing?" "Crying wolf?" "Just rattling their pots and pans?" While real-time analysts, retroactive re-inspectors, and the historical community may be at odds as to how dangerous the War Scare was, all agree that the dearth of available evidence has made conclusions harder to deduce. Some historians have even characterized the study of the War Scare as "an echo chamber of inadequate research and misguided analysis" and "circle reference dependency," with an overreliance upon "the same scanty evidence."^[3]

- To mark the 30th anniversary of the War Scare, the National Security Archive is posting, over three installments, the most complete online collection of declassified U.S. documents, material no longer accessible from the Russian archives, and contemporary interviews, which suggest that the answer to President Reagan's question — were the Soviets "huffing and puffing" or genuinely afraid? — was both, not either or.

Today's posting includes:

- U.S. notes of the "first real meeting between the United States and the Soviet Union since the start of the [Reagan] Administration" in June of 1983 between General Secretary Yuri



One of Ronald Reagan's two index cards containing questions for his March 28, 1984 meeting with Ambassador Hartman.

Andropov and U.S. envoy Averell Harriman, in which Andropov warned of nuclear war through miscalculation four times. Harriman, who had negotiated with Stalin during the Second World War, concluded that Andropov, "seemed to

have a real worry that we could come into conflict through miscalculation."

- KGB annual reports for the years 1981 and 1982 corroborating the creation of Operation RYaN (RYaN was the Russian acronym for *Raketno-Yadernoye Napadenie*, "nuclear missile attack"), the largest peace-time intelligence gathering operation in history to "prevent the possible sudden outbreak of war by the enemy."
- A CIA memo providing evidence of the "Warsaw Pact Early Warning Indicator Project" - the U.S. intelligence community's analogue to Operation RYaN.
- An unpublished, declassified CIA *Studies in Intelligence* article (different from the well-circulated CIA unclassified monograph) which provides a narrative of the War Scare and concludes that Soviet fears of a preemptive U.S. nuclear strike, "while exaggerated, were scarcely insane," and disclosing that the United States also had an intelligence source in Czechoslovakia partially corroborating the British intelligence asset Oleg Gordievsky's reporting that Soviet leaders feared an imminent war.
- Volume four of the National Security Agency's previously classified history, *American Cryptology during the Cold War, 1945-1989* (Volumes one through three can be found [here](#)), which chronicles the years 1980-1989, and asserts that "the period 1982-1984 marked the most dangerous Soviet-American confrontation since the Cuban Missile Crisis."
- Declassified backchannel discussions between Reagan advisor Jack Matlock and Soviet sources who warned of "growing paranoia among Soviet officials" whom the source described as "literally obsessed by fear of war."
- Interviews with high level "unhappy Cold Warriors" in the Soviet military, conducted in the early 1990s, in which they explain their recollections and experiences during the War Scare.

A slide from a September 1983 COMALF briefing provides an overview of JCS exercises in 1982, including troop numbers for Able Archer 82.

A partial overview of NATO exercises conducted in 1983 produced by the National Security Archive.

Before reviewing the documents, it is important to note that the NATO exercise was not known to Soviet intelligence as "Able Archer 83" at the time it was being conducted. Soviet analysts referred to it as "Autumn Forge 83," the name for the larger, months-long, series of NATO maneuvers, of which Able Archer was the conclusion.^[4] Most American military and intelligence analysts would have known the exercise as "Reforger 83," which occurred during the final phase of Autumn Forge

with a momentous "show of resolve" by air-lifting 19,000 troops and 1,500 tons of cargo from the United States to Europe to simulate a conventional war. Able Archer 83, sponsored by the NATO Supreme Allied Commander in Europe (SACEUR) and conducted from 7 to 11 November 1983, simulated the transition from conventional to nuclear war.

The name "Able Archer 83" came into vogue with the first public exposé of the incident in an October 16, 1988, *Sunday Telegraph* article entitled "Brink of World War III: When the World Almost Went to War." Hence, "Able Archer 83," the term most used by the historical community, was not the term most commonly used by actors as the event transpired. In one interview (to be published in a forthcoming Electronic Briefing Book (EBB) in this series), the head of the Soviet General Staff, Marshal Sergei Akhromeyev, states that he did "not remember" Able Archer 83 but added that "[w]e believed that the most dangerous military exercises were Autumn Forge and Reforger." This suggests that some Soviet "non-recollections" of "Able Archer" may not be the best evidence for a lack of danger, and that the War Scare deserves further declassification, research, and examination.^[5]

Below, for submission into the "echo chamber," is the first of three Electronic Briefing Books on the War Scare. This first posting will examine: the unprecedented Soviet espionage effort, Operation RYaN; the "fear of war [that] seemed to affect the elite as well as the man on the street" and that led to the operation; and the Reagan administration's internal debates over the veracity of Soviet attitudes — whether they were "huffing and puffing" or genuinely fearful. The second EBB will examine the exercises Autumn Forge 83, Reforger 83, and Able Archer 83, using NATO, U.S. Air Force, and other documents. The third posting will chronicle the U.S. intelligence community's evolving understanding of and debate over the 1983 War Scare.

THE DOCUMENTS

Listed non-chronologically to present a clearer narrative.

Document 1: Talking Points for Meeting with Ambassador to the Soviet Union Arthur Hartman, March 28, 1984, Confidential.

Source: Reagan Presidential Library, Matlock files, Chron June 1984, Box 5.

Reagan held two index cards with three questions printed on them during his meeting with Ambassador Hartman in the Oval Office. The final one, "Do you think Soviet leaders really fear us, or is all the huffing and puffing just part of their propaganda?" remains the most important question of the 1983 War Scare. In his diary, Reagan wrote, "Art Hartman came by. He's truly a fine Amba. It was good to have a chance to pick his brains." ^[6] But, emblematic of the state of the ongoing War Scare debate, no record of Hartman's response to Reagan's question has been found.

**Document 2: American
Cryptology During the
Cold War, 1945 - 1989,
Book IV: Cryptologic
Rebirth, 1981-1989,
Thomas R. Johnson,
National Security Agency
Center for Cryptologic
History, 1999, Top
Secret-COMINT-
UMBRA/TALENT
KEYHOLE/X1.**

**Source: National
Security Agency Freedom of Information Act release.**

Volume four of the National Security Agency's heavily redacted study on cryptology during the Cold War (see [here](#) for earlier volumes), released to the National Security Archive through the FOIA, is devoted to the Reagan era. The NSA starkly notes that "[t]he Reagan administration marked the height of the Cold War. The president referred to the Soviet Union as the Evil Empire, and was determined to spend it into the ground. The Politburo reciprocated, and the rhetoric on both sides, especially during the first Reagan administration, drove the hysteria. Some called it the Second Cold War. The period 1982-1984 marked the most dangerous Soviet-American confrontation since the Cuban Missile Crisis."

The National Security Agency responded to a 2008 FOIA request on the War Scare by stating that it had 81 relevant documents, but that all were exempt from release. Unhelpfully, the Agency did review, approve for release, stamp, and send a printout of a Wikipedia article.

DOCID: 3471506

Approved for Release by NSA on
03-17-2009; FOIA Case # 5674

Able Archer 83

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

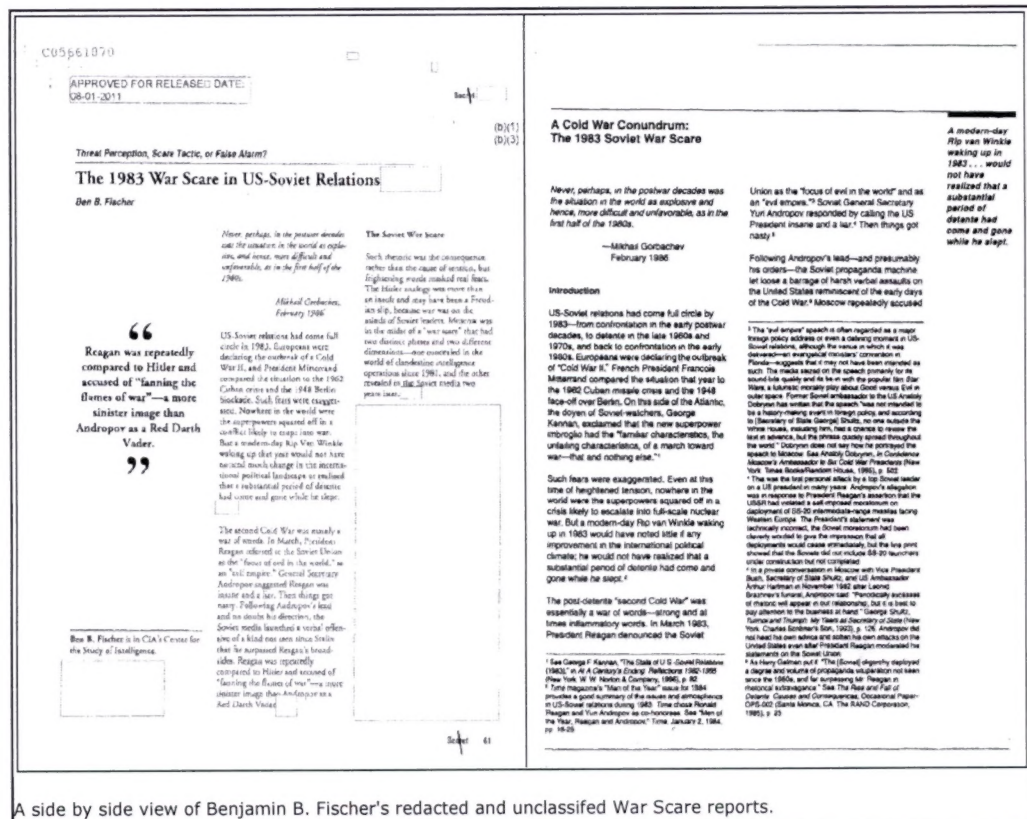
Able Archer 83 was a ten-day NATO exercise starting on November 2, 1983 that spanned the continent of Europe and simulated a coordinated nuclear release.^[1] It incorporated a new, unique format of coded communication, radio silences, participation by heads of state, and a simulated DEFCON 1 nuclear alert. The realistic nature of the exercise, coupled with deteriorating relations between the United States and the Soviet Union and the anticipated arrival of Pershing II nuclear missiles in Europe, led some in the USSR to believe that Able Archer 83 was a genuine nuclear first strike.^{[1][2][3][4]} In response, the Soviets readied their nuclear forces and placed air units in East Germany and Poland on alert.^{[5][6]} This relatively obscure incident is considered by many historians to be the closest the world has come to nuclear war since the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962.^[7] The threat of nuclear war abruptly ended with the conclusion of the Able Archer 83 exercise on November 11, which, coincidentally, was also Armistice Day (alternatively called

Prelude to NATO exercise

Operation RYAN

The greatest catalyst to the Able Archer war scare occurred more than two years earlier. In a May 1981 plot, American members of Exercise VCB officers and Soviet leaders planned

The Wikipedia article on Able Archer 83 the National Security Agency sent us in response to a FOIA request.



A side by side view of Benjamin B. Fischer's redacted and unclassified War Scare reports.

Document 3: CIA *Studies in Intelligence* article by Benjamin B. Fischer, "The 1983 War Scare in US-Soviet Relations," Undated, circa 1996, Secret.

Source: Central Intelligence Agency Freedom of Information Act release.

Two CIA histories -one declassified and redacted, the other unclassified- chronicle the geopolitical factors that made the War Scare "the most dangerous Soviet-American confrontation since the Cuban Missile Crisis."

"The 1983 War Scare in US-Soviet Relations," by Ben B. Fischer, a History Fellow at the CIA's Center for the Study of Intelligence, was authored for the CIA's classified in-house journal, *Studies in Intelligence* — likely prior to the presentation of his longer, unclassified, "A Cold War Conundrum," although its date is redacted. "The 1983 War Scare in US-Soviet Relations" concludes that Soviet fears of a preemptive U.S. nuclear strike, "while exaggerated, were scarcely insane." Fischer's account starkly claims that the U.S. dismissal of legitimate Soviet fears, including of a "decapitating" nuclear strike, left the U.S. vulnerable to the possibility that they could lead to very real dangers, including a preemptive Soviet nuclear strike based purely on misinformation.

After President Reagan's March 1983 assertion that the USSR had violated a self-imposed moratorium on deploying intermediate-range SS-20 missiles facing Western Europe, General Secretary Andropov suggested that Reagan was "insane and a liar," repeatedly compared him to Hitler, and espoused rhetoric that made it seem war was imminent. Fischer writes that U.S. officials gave little credence to Soviet concerns — or dismissed them as propaganda — and argues that the fears were more

nuanced than mere political pandering, as evidenced by Operation RYaN.

According to Fischer's account, based largely on the MI6 and CIA asset Oleg Gordievsky, in 1981 the Soviet Union launched Operation RYaN, a combined intelligence effort among the KGB and their GRU (military intelligence) counterparts, to monitor indications and warnings of U.S. war-planning, and by 1983 RYaN had acquired "an especial degree of urgency." RYaN was, according to Fischer, "for real," and was in part a likely byproduct of American PSYOP tactics conducted throughout the previous two years.

The report also establishes — for the first time — that another CIA source was, at least partially, corroborating Gordievsky's reporting. This Czechoslovak intelligence officer — who worked closely with the KGB on RYaN — "noted that his counterparts were obsessed with the historical parallel between 1941 and 1983. He believed this feeling was almost visceral, not intellectual, and deeply affected Soviet thinking."

This CIA history also reveals that the U.S. military had been probing Soviet airspace to pinpoint vulnerabilities since the beginning of the Reagan administration, and that in 1981 the U.S. Navy led an armada of 83 ships through Soviet waters, effectively eluding "the USSR's massive ocean reconnaissance system and early-warning systems." In addition to the PSYOP exercises, and in the heated aftermath of the KAL 007 tragedy of September 1, 1983, the U.S. Navy flew aircraft 20 miles inside Soviet airspace, prompting Andropov to issue orders that "any aircraft discovered in Soviet airspace be shot down. Air-defense commanders were warned that if they refused to execute Andropov's order, they would be dismissed." Tensions, and Moscow's suspicions of a possible U.S. attack, were high. These events rattled Soviet leaders, already aware that their technological capabilities were lagging behind the U.S., and they ramped up Operation RYaN efforts.

Fischer writes that as the Soviets were conducting Operation RYaN, the U.S. began Able Archer 83, an annual NATO command post exercise that the Soviets were familiar with. However, Gordievsky told MI6 that during Able Archer 83, Moscow incorrectly informed its KGB and GRU stations that U.S. forces were mobilizing in Europe. Air bases in East Germany and Poland were put on alert "for the first and last time during the Cold War." Fischer points out that while the White House was cognizant of Soviet anxiety in the aftermath of Able Archer 83 by way of Gordievsky, there is no corroborating evidence of fear of imminent war from the Kremlin itself, and that other senior Soviet leaders later reported "that none had heard of Able Archer." (Importantly, there was no mention of Autumn Forge or Reforger.) Though Gordievsky's accounts were uncorroborated, they undoubtedly influenced U.S. attitudes toward the Soviets.

Fischer concludes that Operation RYaN and the urgency to collect intelligence on U.S. capabilities was more than what Reagan called "huffing and puffing." He adds that the fear was magnified by the growing technological disparity between the two superpowers, and describes Able Archer 83 as the "last paroxysm at the end of the Cold War."

Document 4: Central Intelligence Agency Intelligence Monograph by Benjamin B. Fischer, "A Cold War Conundrum: The 1983 Soviet War Scare," September 1997, Unclassified.

Source: CIA Electronic Reading Room.

A second, well-circulated historical monograph published by Ben B. Fischer, "A Cold War Conundrum: The 1983 Soviet War Scare" in the CIA's *An Intelligence Monograph* series, is a longer, unclassified update of his classified piece, "The 1983 War Scare in US-Soviet Relations" (see previous document). With a careful reading, "A Cold War Conundrum" gives insight into what the CIA censored from his earlier, redacted *Studies in Intelligence* piece. While much of the information is the same, the CIA likely redacted passages about the Soviet's recognition of their own capabilities, their feelings of vulnerability surrounding recent international disappointments, Oleg Gordievsky's credibility, and the competence of MI6.

This unclassified article also describes a 1981 KGB estimate of world trends, redacted from the earlier piece, that concludes that the "USSR in effect was losing — and the US was winning — the Cold War." While Fischer's redacted article refers to the Soviets' acknowledgment of an unfavorable "correlation of world forces," this unclassified article underscores the USSR's feelings of vulnerability as it was caught in "its own version of America's Vietnam quagmire" in Afghanistan, was being drained economically by Cuba, and was struggling to support the pro-Soviet regimes in Angola and Nicaragua. These vulnerabilities were likely amplified by a visible shift in U.S. public opinion, which now supported the "largest peacetime defense buildup in the nation's history."

The unclassified article also hints at what the largest bulk of redacted portion material likely discusses Oleg Gordievsky. In Appendix B, the unclassified paper outlines the circumstances surrounding Gordievsky's relationship with MI6 as well as potential *bona fides* and blemishes on his credibility and track record. While Fischer generally considers Gordievsky credible and *bona fide*, the CIA's declassifiers have redacted information that supports his credibility, including the fact that the British debriefed him "150 times over a period of several months, taking 6,000 pages of notes that were reviewed by analysts. Everything checked out, and no significant inaccuracies or inconsistencies were uncovered."

The description of CIA rival MI6 as "a storehouse of priceless information which even the CIA would find useful" was also omitted in the earlier article.

Document 5: Department of State memo from Frank H. Perez, Office of Strategic and General Research at the Bureau of Intelligence and Research, to Leonard Weiss, Deputy Director for Functional Research at the Bureau of Intelligence and Research, "Subject: Thoughts on Launch-on-warning," January 29, 1971, Secret.

Source: National Archives, RG 59, Subject-Numeric Files, 1970-1973, Def 12

USSR January 29, 1971, Secret, and related documents .

Document 6: Secretary of Defense to President Carter, " False Alerts ," July 12, 1980, Top Secret, excised copy, and related documents .

Source: Source: Defense Department Freedom of Information Act release.

The primary impetus for Operation RYaN was the Soviet fear of a preemptive nuclear strike driven by both superpowers' reliance on Launch-on-Warning nuclear postures, combined with the planned deployment of Pershing II missiles that could reach Moscow from West Germany in six minutes.^[7] This led to Soviet worries of a "decapitating first strike" and the initiation of Operation RYaN to detect, and possibly preempt this first strike before its launch.

U.S. national security advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski was the victim of one terrifying example proving the danger posed by shrinking warning times, which he recounted to his aide, Robert Gates. Gates, who later served as director of Central Intelligence and secretary of defense, recounted in his memoirs that on November 9, 1979, Brzezinski "was awakened at three in the morning by [military assistant William] Odom, who told him that some 250 Soviet missiles had been launched against the United States. Brzezinski knew that the President's decision time to order retaliation was from three to seven minutes Thus he told Odom he would stand by for a further call to confirm Soviet launch and the intended targets before calling the President. Brzezinski was convinced we had to hit back and told Odom to confirm that the Strategic Air Command was launching its planes. When Odom called back, he reported that ... 2,200 missiles had been launched — it was an all — out attack. One minute before Brzezinski intended to call the President, Odom called a third time to say that other warning systems were not reporting Soviet launches. Sitting alone in the middle of the night, Brzezinski had not awakened his wife, reckoning that everyone would be dead in half an hour. It had been a false alarm. Someone had mistakenly put military exercise tapes into the computer system." ^[8] In 1980 alone, U.S. warning systems generated three more false alerts.

Valentin Falin, a high ranking Soviet official in the Foreign Ministry, described Soviet anxieties in the Central Committee's prominent journal, *Kommunist*. He wrote that with the deployment of Pershing II missiles in 1983, "[i]mperialism has decided to limit both the time and the space of the USSR and for all the world of socialism, to just five minutes for contemplation in a crisis situation."^[9]

President Reagan also realized this danger, writing in his memoirs, "We had many contingency plans for responding to a nuclear attack. But everything would happen so fast that I wondered how much planning or reason could be applied in such a crisis ... *Six minutes* to decide how to respond to a blip on a radar scope and decide whether to unleash Armageddon! How could anyone apply reason at a time like that?"^[10]

Document 7: Interview with Viktor M. Surikov, Deputy Director of the Central Scientific Research Institute, by John G. Hines, September 11, 1993 in *Soviet*

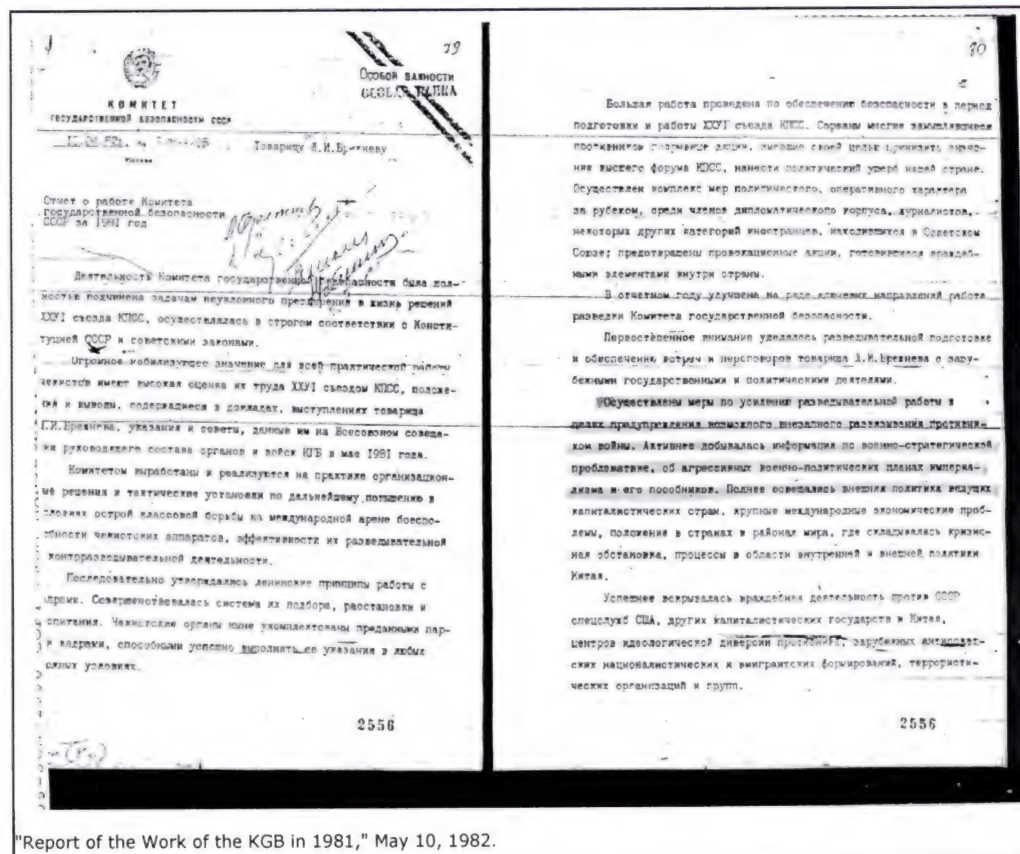
***Intentions 1965-1985: Volume II Soviet Post-Cold War Testimonial Evidence*, by John G. Hines, Ellis M. Mishulovich, of BDM Federal, INC. for the Office of the Secretary of Defense Net Assessment. Unclassified with portions "retroactively" classified.**

Source: Defense Department Freedom of Information Act release.

In 1995, the Pentagon contractor, BDM Corporation, prepared a two-volume study on *Soviet Intentions, 1965-1985*, based on an extraordinarily revealing series of interviews with former senior Soviet defense officials — "unhappy Cold Warriors" — during the final days of the Soviet Union. The interviews contain candid Soviet reflections on the 1983 War Scare.

One interviewee, Viktor Surikov, who had over 30 years experience building, testing, and analyzing military missiles and related systems, acknowledged that a shift toward preemption had occurred on the Soviet side as well. Surikov challenged his interviewer, John Hines, alleging that "U.S. strategy and posture was to strike first in a crisis in order to minimize damage to the U.S. He added that U.S. analysts had concluded that there were tremendous differences in levels of damage to the U.S. under conditions where the U.S. succeeded in successfully preemptively striking Soviet missiles and control systems before they launched versus under conditions of a simultaneous exchange or U.S. retaliation. He said, 'John, if you deny that, then either you're ignorant about your own posture or you're lying to me.' I acknowledged that the U.S. certainly had done such analysis."

Surikov believed that the basic Soviet nuclear position and posture was also preemption. Soviet General Valentin Varennikov, who served on the General Staff, corroborates this dangerous change in nuclear warfighting. He recounts that in 1983, the Soviet military conducted its own exercise, *Zapad* (West) 83, which, "prepared (for the first time since the Second World War) for a situation where our armed forces obtained reliable data of [an adversary's] decision made by highest military and political leadership to launch a surprise attack, using all possible firepower (artillery, aviation, etc.) against us. In response, we conducted offensive operations to disrupt the enemy attack and defeat its troops. That is, a preemptive strike."^[11]



Document 8: KGB Chairman Yuri Andropov to General Secretary Leonid Brezhnev, "Report of the Work of the KGB in 1981," May 10, 1982, and General Secretary Yuri Andropov from Victor Chebrikov, "Report of the Work of the KGB in 1982," March 15, 1983.

While Yuri Andropov's 1981 KGB report to Leonid Brezhnev did not use the specific term "Operation RYaN," it did state that the KGB had "implemented measures to strengthen intelligence work in order to prevent a possible sudden outbreak of war by the enemy." To do this, the KGB "actively obtained information on military and strategic issues, and the aggressive military and political plans of imperialism [the United States] and its accomplices," and "enhanced the relevance and effectiveness of its active intelligence abilities."

These KGB reports (although they do not mention collaboration with the GRU — Soviet military intelligence) square with Gordievsky's account of the establishment of

RYaN.

Gordievsky wrote in 1991, that "In May of 1981 the ageing Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev denounced Reagan's policies in a secret address to a major KGB conference in Moscow. The most dramatic speech, however, was given by Yuri Andropov, [then] Chairman of the KGB ... The new American administration, he declared, was actively preparing for nuclear war. To the astonishment of his audience, Andropov then announced that, by a decision of the Politburo, the KGB and GRU were for the first time to cooperate in a worldwide intelligence operation codenamed RYaN." ^[12]

Document 9: KGB Headquarters Moscow, to the London KGB Residency, "Permanent operational assignment to uncover NATO preparations for a nuclear missile attack on the USSR," and enclosed documents, February 17, 1983, Top Secret.

Source: Christopher Andrew and Oleg Gordievsky, *Comrade Kryuchkov's Instructions: Top Secret Files on KGB Foreign Operations, 1975-1985*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press 1991).

According to Gordievsky, each station chief in "Western countries, Japan, and some states in the Third World" received an Operation RYaN directive. Each was addressed by name, labeled "strictly personal," and was designated to be kept in a special file. The directive stated:

"The objective of the assignment is to see that the Residency works systematically to uncover any plans in preparation by the main adversary [USA] for RYaN and to organize a continual watch to be kept for indications of a decision being taken to use nuclear weapons against the USSR or immediate preparations being made for a nuclear missile attack." ^[13]

Attached to the telegram was a list of seven "immediate" and thirteen "prospective" tasks for the agents to complete and report. These included: the collection of data on potential places of evacuation and shelter, an appraisal of the level of blood held in blood banks, observation of places where nuclear decisions were made and where nuclear weapons were stored, observation of key nuclear decision makers, observation of lines of communication, reconnaissance of the heads of churches and banks, and surveillance of security services and military installations.

Many of the assigned observations would have been very poor indicators of a nuclear attack. Others, including communications lines, nuclear decision makers, and - most significantly - missile depots, might have accurately shown whether a nuclear attack was imminent.

Also attached to the telegram was a thorough and accurate description of the likely methods by which the United States or NATO would launch nuclear war, including a summary of the five DEFCON levels, here called "operational readiness" levels. This attachment emphasized that once the West had decided to launch a nuclear attack; a

substantial preparatory period would be required. These preparations included nuclear consultations through secret channels, transportation of nuclear weapons, and preparation of civil defense institutions.

Regrettably, *Comrade Kryuchkov's Instructions* include a facsimile reproduction of only the first page of this document. The additional pages were translated and typeset into English with no Russian corroboration of their authenticity.

Document 10: "MVR Information re: Results from the work on the improvement of the System for detection of RYAN indications, 9 March 1984," and related documents, Top Secret.

Source: Archive of the Ministry of the Interior and Diplomatic Archive of Bulgaria. Kindly provided by Prof. Jordan Baev.

Documents from other Warsaw Pact countries corroborate Soviet descriptions of Operation RYaN. A Top Secret 1984 Bulgarian intelligence document provided instructions to its agents to monitor underground networks, diplomatic representatives from NATO, combat readiness in neighboring countries, and radio-electronic intelligence. Sources from Czech intelligence also confirm the existence of Operation RYaN and show that compiling an "index of sudden aggression" was the primary mission of Warsaw Pact intelligence agencies.^[14] Fischer's history reports that the German Democratic Republic's Hauptverwaltung Aufklärung, (Main Reconnaissance Administration) played a large role in Operation RYaN. Marcus Wolf, known as "the man without a face," who served for decades as East Germany's spymaster wrote, "our Soviet partners had become obsessed with the danger of a nuclear missile attack."^[15]

One document shows that the Bulgarians monitored "VRYAN indicators" as late as June 1987, and East German documents show that the operation continued until 1990.^[16]

Document 11: National Intelligence Officer for Warning to Director of Soviet Analysis [CIA] from, "Subject: Warsaw Pact Early Warning Indicator Project," 1 February 1985, Secret.

Source: Central Intelligence Agency Freedom of Information Act release.

As this heavily redacted memo shows, Operation RYaN had its analogue in U.S. intelligence gathering. The CIA was also working with the DIA, and presumably allied intelligence agencies, to create a list of indicators — including the defense industry — for its chiefs of station to monitor, in an attempt to "emphasize greater early warning cooperation with intelligence services."

Other parallels to RYaN date back to 1961, when the Soviets also instructed embassies in all "capitalist" countries to collect and report information during the Berlin Crisis.

In 1991, one might have deduced the January 16 Desert Storm invasion by monitoring the influx of pizza deliveries to the Pentagon, according to current U.S. Army Operational Security (OPSEC) training materials.

Document 12: Notes of a Conversation with Secretary of State George Shultz, Undersecretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger, and Averell Harriman, Undated (prior to Harriman's trip to the Soviet Union). (Circa May 1983).

Source: W. Averell Harriman Papers, Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Box 655.

In May of 1983 — as the Soviets were conducting Operation RYaN — Averell Harriman, who had served as the U.S. ambassador to the Soviet Union during the Second World War, would meet face to face with General Secretary Andropov to "size up" the disposition of the Soviet leadership and attempt to determine their perspectives and intentions.

Before travelling to the Soviet Union, Harriman met with Secretary of State George Shultz. The two discussed how Harriman should approach his meeting, agreeing that Harriman should state he is meeting as a private citizen. They also decided that they should continue to push for expanded contact with the Soviet Ambassador to the United States, Anatoly Dobrynin. Shultz told Harriman that since he had "talked with the Soviets more than anyone else" he should "size up" the way that Andropov behaves and estimate "his desire for a better relationship with the US." Harriman concluded the conversation by alluding to the President's confrontational rhetoric, telling Shultz, "I do wish the President could be more careful."

Shultz himself had met Andropov only briefly in November 1982 at Brezhnev's funeral. Shultz noted at the time that he got the feeling the new GenSec "could take us on" and that he "still had a great deal of energy about him" after shaking some 2,000 hands.

Document 13: Memorandum of Conversation with Institute for USA and Canada Studies Director Georgy Arbatov and Averell Harriman, May 31, 1983.

Source: W. Averell Harriman Papers, Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Box 655.

Two days before the meeting with Andropov, the well-connected expert Georgy Arbatov talked to Harriman to "preview" the meeting with the General Secretary. Arbatov revealed Soviet anxiety over the strained state of U.S.-USSR relations, telling Harriman that, "In the Soviet view, this was the first real meeting between the United States and the Soviet Union since the start of the current [Reagan] Administration."

Document 14: Memorandum of Conversation between General Secretary Yuri Andropov and Averell Harriman, 3:00 PM, June 2 1983, CPSU Central Committee Headquarters, Moscow.

Source: W. Averell Harriman Papers, Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Box 655.

Harriman met with General Secretary Andropov for an hour and twenty minutes. Harriman told Andropov he was travelling as a private citizen but was accompanied with a translator provided by the Department of State. Harriman's notes show that he believed that Andropov's fear of war through miscalculation was genuine, rather than — to quote Reagan — "huffing and puffing."

Andropov opened the conversation by stating: "Let me say that there are indeed grounds for alarm." He bemoaned the harsh anti-Soviet tone of President Reagan and warned that, "The previous experience of relations between the

Soviet Union and the United States cautions beyond all doubt that such a policy can merely lead to aggravation, complexity and danger." Andropov alluded to nuclear war four times during his short statement; most ominously, he morosely stated, "It would seem that awareness of this danger should be precisely the common denominator with which statesmen of both countries would exercise restraint and seek mutual understanding to strengthen confidence, to avoid the irreparable. However, I must say that I do not see it on the part of the current administration and they may be moving toward the dangerous 'red line.'"

Harriman concluded: "the principal point which the General Secretary appeared to be trying to get ... was a genuine concern over the state of U.S.-Soviet relations and his desire to see them at least 'normalized,' if not improved. He seemed to have a real worry that we could come into conflict through miscalculation."

Document 15: "Meeting of the Politburo," Working notes, August 4, 1983, Top Secret.

Source: Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, Dmitrii Antonovich



(U) Yuri Andropov

A photo of Soviet leader Yuri Andropov from the NSA's *American Cryptology During the Cold War, 1945 - 1989*, Book IV: *Cryptologic Rebirth, 1981-1989*.

Volkogonov Papers, Container 26, Reel 17.

Two months after meeting with Harriman, Andropov presided over an August 1983 Politburo meeting — one of the last he attended before being committed to a hospital bed beginning in September — and spoke of using "diplomatic propaganda actions" to stop the deployment of Pershing II missiles. Andropov enumerated three measures the Soviet leadership needed to take to attempt to stop the November deployment in Western Europe of the Pershings, which could reach Moscow in less than six minutes -striking before the Soviet leadership could retreat to their bunkers.

- "1. We must not lose time setting in motion all the levers that could impact the governments and parliaments of the NATO countries in order to create maximum obstruction on the path of deployment of American missiles in Europe.
2. It is essential to smartly and precisely coordinate all of this, so diplomatic propaganda actions must complement and reinforce each other.
3. Steps should not be formal, but specifically designed to produce the effect [of aborted deployment]."

Andropov's speech confirms that the Soviets were using propaganda as a tool to stop the deployment of Pershing II missiles, but also reflected the Soviet fear of the destabilization of the nuclear balance referenced in the 1981 and 1982 KGB reports.

Document 16: Unpublished Interview with State Department Official Mark Palmer, (Excerpt), Undated, circa 1989-1990.

Source: Princeton University, Mudd Manuscript Library, Don Oberdorfer Papers 1983-1990, Series 3, Research Documents Files.

The late Mark Palmer, a top Kremlinologist in the State Department (and U.S. ambassador to Hungary from 1986 to 1990), retrospectively summarized the Reagan administration's internal "argument" about "what the Soviet view of the West is," in an unpublished interview with *The Washington Post's* Don Oberdorfer.

"Paul [Nitze's and others] view is that they [the Soviets] never really felt threatened ...And most Western analysts — or many, particularly the political-military type analysts feel that way, because they have a hard time, I think, psychologically seeing, as most people do, seeing themselves as possibly being a bad guy in anyone else's eyes....

"I, on the other hand, think that what Gordievsky [whom he met] reported in '81 and etc. — that he's reporting accurately the mood in Moscow. That the Soviets have felt surrounded, that they are paranoid, that they have seen us as being unpredictable and irresponsible from their point of view in doing all sorts of things — invading communist countries, etc, all sorts of stuff. Therefore, I find this entirely credible that they could have, during [what was] a very tense period anyway, [] saw the INF deployments as a threat to them. These were missiles that could hit the Soviet Union. Their [analogous] missiles -the SS 20s- could not hit the United States."

Document 17: United States Information Agency Memorandum for CIA Director William J. Casey, from Charles Z. Wick, "Soviet Propaganda Alert No. 13," May 5, 1983, Unclassified.

Source: CIA Records Search Tool (CREST) at the National Archives, Doc No/ESDN: CIA RDP85M00364R001903760018-0.

The USIA's "Soviet Propaganda Alerts" regularly reported to policymakers news summaries from the Soviet press framed as propaganda orchestrated by the Soviet leadership for political means.

The thirteenth issue of the "Soviet Propaganda Alert," sent to CIA Director William Casey, relayed that Soviet media had reported that the Pentagon was making "horrendous plans for unleashing and conducting protracted nuclear war against the Soviet Union." Soviet media described the U.S. strategy as "escalating a conflict to nuclear war and delivering a first strike, in particular by intermediate-range missiles in Western Europe."

Document 18: "Subject: U.S.-Soviet Relations," The White House Memorandum of Conversation, October 11, 1983, Secret.

Source: Reagan Presidential Library, Matlock Files, Chron October 1983 [10/11/1983-10/24/1983], Box 2, 90888.

U.S.-Soviet backchannel contacts warned that the tense atmosphere in the Soviet Union was not only propaganda. This memo summarizes NSC Soviet expert Jack Matlock's lunch meeting with Sergei Vishensky, a columnist for *Pravda*, with "sound Party and (almost certainly) KGB credentials" at The Buck Stops Here Cafeteria. Vishensky, whom Matlock believes was "conveying a series of messages someone in the regime wants us to hear," warned that "the state of U.S.-Soviet relations has deteriorated to a dangerous point. Many in the Soviet public are asking if war is imminent." He also told Matlock that "the leadership is convinced that the Reagan Administration is out to bring their system down and will give no quarter; therefore they have no choice but to hunker down and fight back."

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DOMESTIC POLICY

ENTIRE TEXT

2. SUMMARY: AN AMERICAN ACADEMIC WITH EXCELLENT ENTREE TO THE SOVIET POLITICAL ELITE BRIEFED EMBASSY ON HIS DISCUSSIONS HERE NOVEMBER 28-DECEMBER 8. HE BELIEVES, BASED ON THESE DISCUSSIONS, THAT A SIGNIFICANT SHIFT HAS TAKEN PLACE IN SOVIET THINKING AND ATTITUDES, ESPECIALLY TOWARDS THE U.S., OVER THE PAST SIX MONTHS. WHERE EARLIER SOVIET POLICY-MAKING WAS FOUNDED ALMOST EXCLUSIVELY ON PRAGMATISM AND REASONED CALCULATION, OF SOVIET INTERESTS, EMOTIONALITY AND EVEN IRRATIONALITY ARE NOW ENTERING INTO PLAY. THE ACADEMIC PERCEIVES A GROWING PARANCA AMONG SOVIET OFFICIALS, AND SEES THEM LITERALLY OPSESSED BY FEAR OF WAR. HE BELIEVES THAT THE U.S. PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS HAVE BECOME THE CENTRAL DETERMINING FACTOR IN SOVIET FOREIGN POLICY.

3. THE ACADEMIC HAS NOTED, FURTHER, A CERTAIN SENSE OF LEADERLESSNESS AND A LACK OF AN INTEGRATED FOREIGN POLICY, WHICH HE ATTRIBUTES TO ANDROPOV'S LENGTHY ABSENCE FROM THE SCENE AND THE UNCERTAINTY THIS HAS GENERATED. HE FEELS THAT THERE ARE SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCES WITHIN THE LEADERSHIP--PARTICULARLY ON DOMESTIC POLICY--AND PINPOINTS THE LOWER PARTY ORGANS (AT THE DISTRICT LEVEL) AND THE ECONOMIC BUREAUCRACIES AS THE MAJOR SOURCES OF OPPOSITION TO ANDROPOV'S DOMESTIC PROGRAMS, AND ANTICIPATES THAT ANDROPOV WILL SHORTLY ATTEMPT TO OVERCOME THIS OPPOSITION THROUGH WIDESPREAD PERSONNEL CHANGES IN THE ECONOMIC MINISTRIES AND AT LOWER PARTY LEVELS. ALTHOUGH THE ACADEMIC SENSED THE SAME WIDESPREAD RECOGNITION AMONG HIS INTERLOCUTORS AS HE HAD DURING A PREVIOUS VISIT IN MAY OF THE NECESSITY FOR ECONOMIC CHANGE, HE DETECTED MUCH LESS OPTIMISM THAT THE KIND OF CHANGES REQUIRED TO BRING OUT OF THE CURRENT IMPASSE COULD BE REALIZED. HIS OWN BELIEF IS THAT THE LEADERSHIP IS EITHER UNWILLING OR UNABLE TO PURSUE OTHER THAN A GRADUAL, INCREMENTAL APPROACH TO ECONOMIC CHANGE, AND THAT EACH SMALL STEP WILL BE ABSORBED BY THE SYSTEM RATHER THAN REFORM IT.

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A December 10, 1983, National Security Council memorandum on Soviet foreign and domestic policy states that "emotionalism and even irrationality are coming into play."

Document 19: Memorandum for National Security Advisor Robert McFarlane from Soviet expert Jack Matlock, "Subject: American Academic on Soviet Policy," December 13, 1983, Confidential with attached EXDIS cable from the American Embassy in Moscow.

Source: Reagan Presidential Library, Matlock Files, Chron December 1983 [1 of 2], Box 2, 90888

Other sources confirmed this fear of war. In February, Jack Matlock sent National

Security Advisor Robert McFarlane a memo warning that since mid-1983, a "fear of war seemed to affect the elite as well as the man on the street." He attached a copy of a December 10, 1983, cable describing information from "an American academic with excellent entrée to the Soviet political elite." The academic warned of "growing paranoia among Soviet officials and sees them literally obsessed by fear of war," and a growing "emotionality and even irrationality" among the elite. The attached EXDIS cable goes further, recounting "a high degree of paranoia among Soviet officials ... not unlike the atmosphere of thirty years ago."

Document 20: Herbert E. Meyer, National Intelligence Council, "Subject: The View from Moscow, November 1983 Undated." Secret.

Source: Reagan Presidential Library, Fortier Files, Soviet Project [1 of 2], Box 97063.

Herbert E. Meyer, Vice Chairman of the National Intelligence Council, summarized and circulated two views of the uncertainty in Moscow in this 1983 memo, which — as Mark Palmer suggested — was "an attempt to place ourselves in Soviet shoes [and] look at the world as they look at it."

After presenting a bleak view for the future of the Soviet Union the memo concludes by asking, "What does all this mean for future Soviet actions?" He presented two views: that the Soviet leadership would either "make necessary sacrifices to stay in the game, get their licks in whenever and wherever they can, and count on new successes to come" or, with less likelihood, "the Soviets might consider themselves backed into a corner and lash out dangerously."

Document 21: For National Security Advisor Robert McFarlane from acting Central Intelligence Agency Director John McMahon, "Subject: Andropov's Leadership Style and Strategy," February 3, 1984, Secret.

Source: Central Intelligence Agency Electronic Reading Room.

Acting CIA Director John McMahon and National Security Advisor Robert McFarlane also debated whether the Soviet fear of war was genuine. McMahon asserted that "clearly Andropov has a stake in the 'appearance' of bilateral tension as long as it appears that the United States is the offending party. This would not be the first time that Soviet leaders have used international tensions to mobilize their populations," espousing the view held by some officials — and supported by Andropov's August 4 Politburo speech — that Soviet leadership did at times attempt to gin up its own population with fear of war for political gain.

Document 22: Series of five interviews with Colonel General Andrian A. Danilevich by John G. Hines, December 18, 1990 to December 9, 1994, in *Soviet*

***Intentions 1965-1985: Volume II Soviet Post-Cold War Testimonial Evidence*, by John G. Hines, Ellis M. Mishulovich, of BDM Federal, INC. for the Office of the Secretary of Defense, Office of Net Assessment. Unclassified with portions "retroactively" classified.**

Source: Defense Department Freedom of Information Act release.

BDM interviews conducted with the Soviet military elite after the USSR's collapse provide a retrospective glimpse into the minds of the Soviets, whom some U.S. policy makers were trying to understand in 1983.

Andrian Danilevich, a senior military strategist who reported to Marshal Akhromeyev and authored the three-volume *Strategy of Deep Operations*, "the basic reference document for Soviet strategic and operational nuclear and conventional planning," told interviewer John Hines of a general fear of war. He recalled "vivid personal memories" and "frightening situations" during "the period of great tension" in 1983, but that there was never a sense of "an immediate threat" of attack within the general staff. The KGB, he said, may have "overstated the level of tension" because they "are generally incompetent in military affairs and exaggerate what they do not understand."

While recognizing the increased danger of the War Scare, the Soviet General Staff appeared to be less fearful of an imminent American nuclear strike than their KGB counterparts.

Document 23: Interview with Lieutenant General Gelii Viktorovich Batenin by John G. Hines, August 6, 1993 in *Soviet Intentions 1965-1985: Volume II Soviet Post-Cold War Testimonial Evidence*, by John G. Hines, Ellis M. Mishulovich, of BDM Federal, INC. for the Office of the Secretary of Defense Net Assessment. Unclassified with portions "retroactively" classified.

Source: Defense Department Freedom of Information Act release.

Gelii Batenin, who worked for Marshal Akhromeyev in the General Staff, told interviewers, "I am very familiar with RYaN." He also confirmed that the situation was tense but that he personally felt no fear of imminent war. "There was a great deal of tension in the General Staff at that time and we worked long hours, longer than usual. I don't recall a period more tense since the Caribbean Crisis in 1962."

Document 24: Interview with Colonel General Varfolomei Vladimirovich Korobushin with participation by Senior Defense Department Advisor Vitalii Kataev by John G. Hines, December 10, 1992 in *Soviet Intentions 1965-1985: Volume II Soviet Post-Cold War Testimonial Evidence*, by John G. Hines, Ellis M. Mishulovich, of BDM Federal, INC. for the Office of the Secretary of Defense Net Assessment. Unclassified with portions "retroactively" classified.

Source: Defense Department Freedom of Information Act release.

Vitalii Kataev, former Defense Industry Department Senior Advisor, recounted the situation as more dire than some of his colleagues remembered: "We in the Central Committee's Defense Department considered the early 1980s to be a crisis period, a pre-wartime period. We organized night shifts so that there was always someone on duty in the Central Committee. When Pershing IIs were deployed, there appeared the question of what to do with them in case they were in danger of falling into Warsaw Pact hands during a war. These missiles had to be launched. This made them extremely destabilizing. Furthermore, the only possible targets of these missiles was our leadership in Moscow because Pershings could not reach most of our missiles."

Varfolomei Korobushin, former Deputy Chief of Staff of Strategic Rocket Forces revealed that, "it took just 13 seconds to deliver the decision [to launch a nuclear attack] to all of the launch sites in the Soviet Union."

Document 25: Series of six interviews with Dr. Vitalii Nikolaevich Tsygichko, General Staff Analyst by John G. Hines, December 10, 1990-1991 in *Soviet Intentions 1965-1985: Volume II Soviet Post-Cold War Testimonial Evidence*, by John G. Hines, Ellis M. Mishulovich, of BDM Federal, INC. for the Office of the Secretary of Defense Net Assessment. Unclassified with portions "retroactively" classified.

Source: Defense Department Freedom of Information Act release.

After acknowledging that "victory" in a nuclear war, even if achieved, would be "meaningless," Vitalii Tsygichko revealed how a Soviet nuclear launch would progress:

"The plan, which was updated every 6 months, called for Soviet "launch-under-attack" [*otvetno-vstrechnyi udar*] using *all* Soviet silo-based systems. This annihilating retaliatory nuclear strike [*unichtozhaiushchii otvetno-yadernyi udar*] would be directed not against U.S. silos, which Soviet planners assumed would be empty, but rather against military targets (such as airfields, ports, and C³ facilities) and against the U.S. political and economic infrastructure (including transportation grids and fuel supply lines)."

During a 2006 oral history conference he warned that not all Soviets (or Americans) understood the consequences of nuclear war as well as he:

"Among politicians as well as the military, there were a lot of crazy people who would not consider the consequences of a nuclear strike. They just wanted to respond to a certain action without dealing with the 'cause and effect' problems. They were not seeking any reasonable explanations, but used one selective response to whatever an option was. I know many military people who look like normal people, but it was difficult to explain to them that waging nuclear war was not feasible. We had a lot of arguments in this respect. Unfortunately, as far as I know, there are a lot of stupid people both in NATO and our country."^[17]

Document 26: October 10, 1983, Diary Entry by Ronald Reagan.

Source: *The Reagan Diaries Unabridged: Volume 1: January 1981-October 1985*, edited by Douglas Brinkley, some information censored by request of the National Security Council.

President Reagan himself came to an epiphany of the unfeasibility of nuclear war during this period. On the morning of Columbus day, October 10, 1983, he watched an advance screening of the television film *The Day After*, at Camp David. *The Day After* was a realistic portrayal of nuclear war described by *The Washington Post* as a "horrific vision of nuclear holocaust." Reagan wrote in his diary: "It has Lawrence Kansas wiped out in a nuclear war with Russia. It is powerfully done -all \$7 mil. worth. It's very effective & left me greatly depressed."^[18] As Andropov had told Harriman, the leaders of the two superpowers did indeed share a "common denominator:" fear of the danger of "conflict through miscalculation."

The next War Scare Electronic Briefing Book will rely on documents including a NATO summary and declassified after-action reports to present the most detailed description to date of Able Archer 83, the NATO drill that "practice[d] command and control procedures with a particular emphasis on the transition from purely conventional operations to chemical, nuclear and conventional operations ... with three days of 'low spectrum' conventional play followed by two days of 'high spectrum' nuclear warfare."

NOTES

- ✓ [1] Robert Gates, *From the Shadows: The Ultimate Insider's Story of Five Presidents and How They Won the Cold War*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2007), 273.
- ✓ [2] Fritz Ermarth, "Observations on the " War Scare of 1983 From an Intelligence Perch," for the Parallel History Project on NATO and the Warsaw Pact, November 6, 2003.
- ✓ [3] Mark Kramer, "The Able Archer 83 Non-Crisis: Did Soviet Leaders Really Fear an Imminent Nuclear Attack in 1983?," Thorsten Borring Olesen, "Truth on Demand: Denmark and the Cold War," in Nanna Hvidt and Hans Mouritzen, ed., *Danish Foreign Policy Yearbook 2006*, Danish Institute for international Studies, 105; see also
- ✓ Beth A. Fischer's review of Vojtech Mastny's "How Able was 'Able Archer'?" at H-Diplo.
- [4] See for instance, Colonel L. V. Levadov, "*Itogi operativnoi podgotovki obedinennykh sil NATO v 1983 godu*" (Results of the Operational Training of NATO Joint Armed Forces in 1983," *Voyennaya Mysl'* (Military Thought), no. 2 (February 1984), 67-76.

[5] One recent paper, "The Able Archer 83 Non-Crisis: Did Soviet Leaders Really Fear an Imminent Nuclear Attack in 1983?," relies primarily upon an analysis of Politburo minutes from 1983 and early 1984, (which do not mention "Able Archer 83" or the specific threat of imminent nuclear war), to deduce that the "purported crisis" of 1983 "did not exist at all." The minutes of these meetings can be found in a donation to the Library of Congress by Soviet general-turned-historian Dmitri Volkogonov, and in "Fond 89," a collection of documents "submitted to the Constitutional Court of the Russian Federation for the trial of the Soviet Communist Party" in 1992 and published by Stanford University's Hoover Institution. One must keep in mind, however, that historians do not yet have access to the minutes of every Politburo meeting from that period. (For that matter, a set of August 4, 1983, minutes included below, but not in the "The Able Archer 83 Non-Crisis" paper, describes Andropov's instructions to use "all levers" to stop the deployment of Pershing II missiles in Europe.) Most importantly, the key discussions during Andropov's tenure as General Secretary did not occur in formal Politburo meetings, but at his hospital bedside. According to historian Roy Medvedev's biography, Andropov would summon his advisors, generals, and Politburo members to his hospital bed to govern the Soviet Union. It was there that Andropov was "fully engaged in the leadership of the country and the army, and the defense of the country," according to Marshal Nikolai Ogarkov. As such, an examination of sources broader than select Politburo minutes is required to attain the full picture of the Soviet leadership's views on the 1983 War Scare. Roy A. Medvedev, *Neizvestnii Andropov* (The Unknown Andropov), (Rostov: Feniks, 1999), 379-382. The Politburo minutes cited in "The Able Archer 83 Non-Crisis" are: May 26, 1983; May 31, 1983; July 7, 1983; September 2, 1983; September 8, 1983; November 15, 1983; November 24, 1983; January 19, 1984; February 10, 1984; February 23, 1984; and March 1, 1984. They can be viewed at the National Security Archive.

[6] Ronald Reagan, *The Reagan Diaries Unabridged: Volume 1: January 1981-October 1985*, edited by Douglass Brinkley, (New York: HarperCollins, 2009), 333.

[7] Pershing IIs were not deployed to Europe until 23 November 1983, but former CIA analyst Peter Vincent Pry speculates that it is likely that Soviet intelligence believed several Pershing II missiles had been deployed before their announced date. Their impending deployment, along with launch on warning doctrine led to an increased reliance upon human intelligence (as opposed to radar and satellite technology) to monitor for a nuclear attack and the creation of Operation RYaN. Pry, Peter Vincent, *War Scare: Russia and America on the Nuclear Brink*, (Westport: Praeger, 1999), p. 34.

[8] Robert M. Gates. *From the Shadows: The Ultimate Insider's Story of Five Presidents and How they Won the Cold War* (New York: Simon & Shuster, 1996), 114.

[9] Raymond Garthoff, *The Great Transition: American-Soviet Relations and the End of the Cold War*, (Washington D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1994), 173.

[10] Ronald Reagan, *An American Life: Ronald Reagan*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1990), 257.

[11] Valentin Varennikov, *Nepovtorimoe, (Unique) Volume 4*, (Moscow: Sovetskii Pisatel' 2001), 168. Varennikov was also commander of Soviet forces in Afghanistan and later participated in the putsch attempt against Mikhail Gorbachev in 1991.

[12] Christopher Andrew and Oleg Gordievsky, *Comrade Kryuchkov's Instructions: Top Secret Files on KGB Foreign Operations, 1975-1985*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press 1991), 67. A quasi-official history of Russian foreign intelligence states that the goal of Operation RYAN was to counter "the real threat to the security of the USSR and Warsaw Pact countries" caused by Western military developments and the introduction of new weapons systems. A.I. Kolpakidi and D.P. Prokhorov, *Vneshnyaya razvedka Rossii* (The Foreign Intelligence Service of Russia) (Saint Petersburg: Neva, 2001), 80.

[13] Other sources vary the spelling of RYaN. Soviet Ambassador to the United States Anatoly Dobrynin spelled it "ryon." Another spelling includes the word "surprise:" "VRYAN" "vnezapnoe raketno yadernoe napadenie" --surprise nuclear missile attack. Czech Intelligence referred to the operation as NRJAN. Anatoly Dobrynin, *In Confidence: Moscow's Ambassador to Six Cold War Presidents* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2001), 523; Oleg Kalugin, *The First Directorate: My 32 Years in Intelligence and Espionage Against the West*, (New York: St. Martins, 1994), 302; 9 March 1984, Bulgarian Ministry of Interior; MVR Information re: Results from the work on the improvement of the System for detection of RYAN indications, AMVR, Fond 1, Record 12, File 553, provided by Jordan Baev; Peter Rendek, "Operation ALAN - Mutual Cooperation of the Czechoslovak Intelligence Service and the Soviet KGB as Given in One of the Largest Leakage Cases of NATO Security Data in the Years 1982 - 1986."

[14] Rendek, "Operation ALAN - Mutual Cooperation of the Czechoslovak Intelligence Service and the Soviet KGB as Given in One of the Largest Leakage Cases of NATO Security Data in the Years 1982 - 1986," Presented at The NKVD/KGB Activities and its Cooperation with other Secret Services in Central and Eastern Europe 1945 - 1989 Conference, Bratislava, 14-16 November 2007.

[15] Markus Wolf with Anne McElvoy, *Man without a Face: The Autobiography of Communism's Greatest Spymaster* (New York: Random House, 1997), 222.

[16] Vojtech Mastny, "How Able Was "Able Archer"? Nuclear Trigger and Intelligence in Perspective," *Journal of Cold War Studies*, Volume 11, Number 1, Winter 2009, 121.

[17] Jen Hoffenaar and Christopher Findlay, eds., *Military Planning for European Theatre Conflict During the Cold War: An Oral History Roundtable Stockholm, 24-25 April 2006*, Center for Security Studies ETH Zurich, 161.

[18] Reagan, *Diaries*, 273.

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A slide from the unclassified September 9, 1983, commander airlift forces briefing on Autumn Forge 82 depicts a mouse quietly flying in on a leaf.

The 1983 War Scare: "The Last Paroxysm" of the Cold War Part II

Part II: "Blue's use of nuclear weapons did not stop Orange's aggression."

Able Archer 83 Declassified

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By William Burr,
December 10, 2009

The 3 A.M. Phone Call

By William Burr, March
1, 2012

**"One Misstep Could
Trigger a Great War":
Operation RYAN, Able
Archer 83, and the
1983 War Scare**

By Nate Jones, May 17,
2009

War Scare, Part 2



Nate Jones describes the second War Scare posting.

The Able Archer controversy has featured numerous descriptions of the exercise as so "routine" that it could not have alarmed the Soviet military and political leadership. Today's posting reveals multiple non-routine elements, including: a 170-flight, radio-silent air lift of 19,000 US soldiers to Europe, the shifting of commands from "Permanent War Headquarters to the Alternate War Headquarters," the practice of "new nuclear weapons release procedures," including consultations with cells in Washington and London, and the "sensitive, political issue" of numerous "slips of the tongue" in which B-52 sorties were referred to as nuclear "strikes." These variations, seen through "the fog of nuclear exercises," did in fact match official Soviet intelligence-defined indicators for "possible operations by the USA and its allies on British territory in preparation for RYaN" — the KGB code name for a feared Western nuclear missile attack (*Raketno-Yadernoye Napadenie*).^[1]

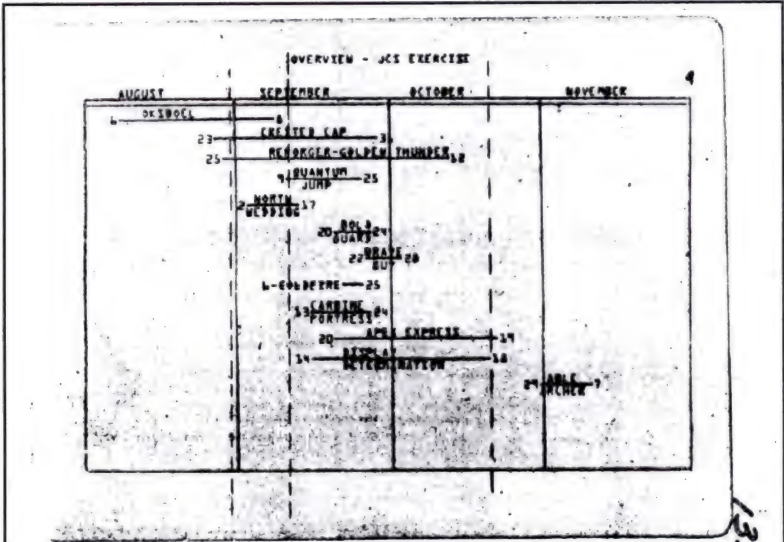
To mark the 30th anniversary of the War Scare, the National Security Archive is posting, over three installments, the most complete online collection of declassified US documents, material from the Russian archives, and contemporary interviews on the 1983 War Scare. An [earlier posting](#) examined the debate over whether the Soviets were genuinely fearful of a Western nuclear attack or were "just huffing and

puffing."

This Electronic Briefing Book draws from an unpublished official NATO summary of Able Archer 83, declassified Air Force histories and after-action reports, and a previously unpublished interview with Soviet Chief of Staff Marshal Akhromeyev in which he calls European-wide NATO exercises "the most dangerous." The new material suggests that, during the dangerous year of 1983, when Soviet and US relations were at their nadir, Able Archer 83 included new quirks that made it provocative enough to increase the chance of nuclear war "through miscalculation."

Today's
posting
includes:

- An



A slide from a September 1983 COMALF briefing provides an overview of JCS exercises in 1982, including troop numbers for Able Archer 82.

Partial Overview - NATO Exercises - 1983			
August	September	October	November
AUTUMN FORGE 19,000 US troops and as many as 40,000 NATO troops.			
	REFORGER At least 16,044 US troops.		ABLE ARCHER A small command post exercise involving only NATO headquarter cells (including "small response cells" from the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, British Ministry of Defense, and NATO headquarters with "no troops on the ground" participating). The exercise may have included as few as several hundred players.

Sources

"History of Military Air Force Command: 1 January - 31 December 1982: Supporting Documents Volume IX, Confidential and

"For Military Air Force Command units, the annual Reforger exercise ends. Moving the Forces of War, from March 1984 Air Force

"History of Military Air Force Command: 1 January - 31 December 1982: Supporting Documents Volume IX, Confidential

"Exercise Able Archer 83: Information from SHAPE Historical Files," March 2013, NATO, Unclassified

and

Air Force Seventh Air Division, Kansas Air Force Base, "Exercise Able Archer 83 After Action Report," December 1, 1983, Secret MO/DA

official summary of Able Archer 83 produced by the Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE), which conducted the exercise, presents for the first time a detailed chronology of the war game, lists the participants in the exercise, and gives the reader a chilling glimpse of how NATO envisioned World War Three could begin. The war game describes a confrontation between Blue (NATO) and Orange (a thinly-disguised Warsaw Pact led by the USSR) beginning after a change in Orange leadership leads to resentment and pushback of Blue gains in the Persian Gulf. Orange retaliates in the form of an invasion of Yugoslavia, Finland, and eventually Norway. Blue defends its allies and conventional war descends into chemical, and eventually nuclear war. After Orange gains further advances, "SACEUR requested initial first use of nuclear weapons against fixed targets in Orange satellite countries." However, "Blue's use of nuclear weapons did not stop Orange's aggression." Then, "a follow-on use of nuclear weapons was executed on the morning of 11 November." At that point, the exercise ended.

- The first declassified after-action reports of exercise Able Archer 83. The most extensive of these, written by the US Strategic Air Command, provides a detailed chronology of Able Archer 83 and shows that the exercise lasted from November 7 to November 11, 1983. It also reports that there was a SACEUR decision before the exercise began "to reduce the level of nuclear exchange between Blue and Orange," and reveals the "sensitive, political issue" of "slips of the tongue" in which B-52 sorties were referred to in communications as "strikes." This was important, the after-action report noted, because eavesdropping Soviets may have asked, "if B-52 aircraft are present in a nuclear scenario exercise, are they being used to perform strike missions?"
- Other briefings and after action reports clarify that Able Archer 83 was one of several (at least six) exercises under the "umbrella" of Autumn Forge 83, which simulated a war with "Orange Pact" forces in Europe. The largest exercise under the "umbrella" of Autumn Forge 83 was Reforger 83, short for "return of US forces to Germany," a radio-silent, 170-flight airlift of troops from the US to Europe to simulate a land war against "Orange" (Warsaw Pact) forces. When this land war turned

nuclear, Able Archer simulated "command and control procedures with particular emphasis on the transition from purely conventional operations to chemical, nuclear and conventional operations."

- A previously unpublished interview with Marshal Sergei Akhromeyev that points to the importance of the distinctions — and interrelation — between Autumn Forge 83, Reforger 83, and Able Archer 83. Akhromeyev stated that he did not remember "Able Archer 83" but that, "we believed the most dangerous military exercises are [were] Autumn Forge and Reforger. These are [were] the NATO exercise in Europe." Akhromeyev finds unlikely support in another previously unpublished interview. Caspar Weinberger who served as US Secretary of Defense during the War Scare said, "the difference between a realistic exercise or maneuver and what could be preparations for an attack, that line is sometimes quite blurred."



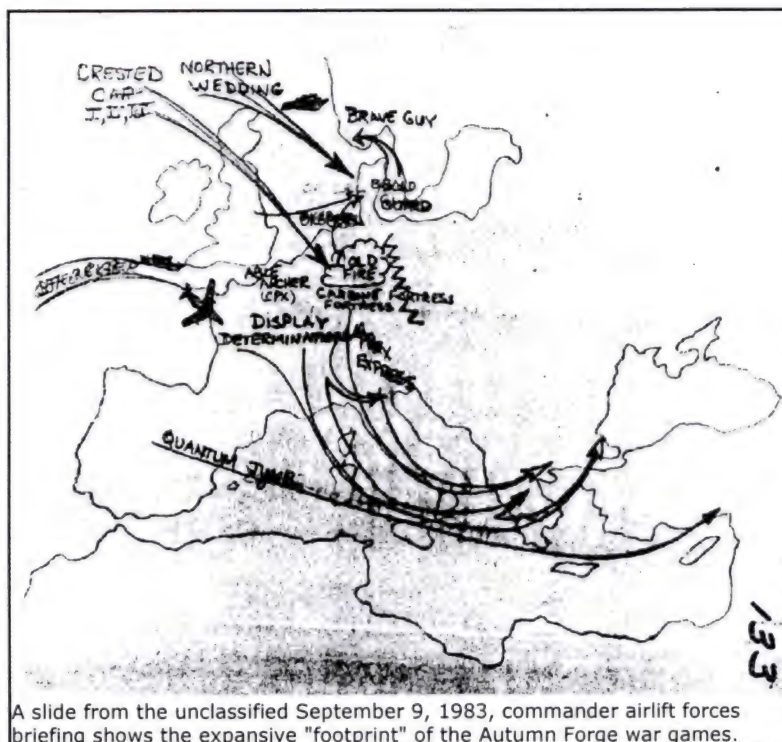
International honor guard presents colors during Autumn Forge 83. From *Air Man*.

THE DOCUMENTS

Document 1: "Autumn Forge 83 - Comalf [commander airlift forces] Briefing," September 9, 1983, Unclassified.

Source: *History of the 322nd Airlift Division, January 1982 - December 1983, Volume VII Supporting Documents, Prepared by Edgar P. Sneed, Division Historian, Unclassified. Released under*

the
Freedom
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A slide from the unclassified September 9, 1983, commander airlift forces briefing shows the expansive "footprint" of the Autumn Forge war games.

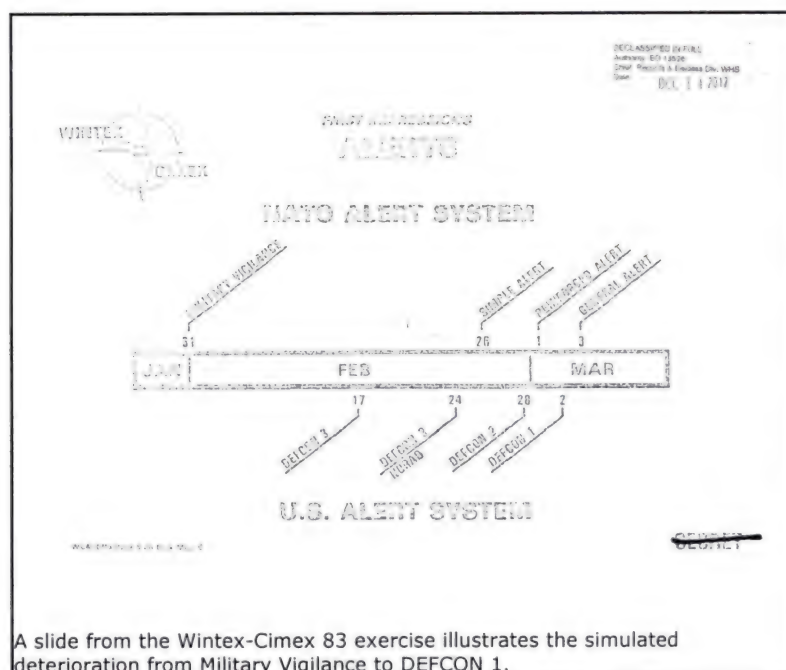
Information Act (FOIA).

Slides from Autumn Forge 82 show the "umbrella" nature of that annual maneuver. Autumn Forge 82 had 24 exercises conducted "beneath" it from August 6 1982 to November 7, 1982, which spanned the European continent. (An illustration of an umbrella — and a mouse "foraging" — are even included in the slides.) Able Archer 82 was the final exercise of the Autumn Forge 82 series; the same pattern occurred the next year. The slides indicate that the objectives of Autumn Forge 82 were to "Demonstrate solidarity of NATO committed forces," "conduct military operations in Europe with necessary C3 systems,^[2]" and "familiarize external reinforcements with NATO doctrine, war plans, and procedures."

Document 2: "Notes of WINTEX 83 Senior Level First Impressions Conference, 22 Mar 1983" and related Documents.

Source: US Air Force FOIA release.

In March 1983, four months after Autumn Forge 82, the US conducted operation Wintex-Cimex 83, a large-scale annual NATO war game — at a similar scale to Autumn Forge — including the "US full



reinforcement of Europe," simulated "full mobilization," and culminating in the approval of NATO nuclear release requests and a simulated transition from "military vigilance to "Defcon 1."

In March 1983, "senior level" US officials debriefed Wintex-Cimex 83 with an eye towards the next exercise, in the fall of 1983. A primary concern, voiced by the representatives for the Secretary of Defense, was the need for enhanced participation from "higher level players" in Washington DC because, according to General Richard G. Stilwell, "bringing a coalition from crisis to war is demanding. We must continue to practice these exercises." According to a later slide, the "[e]xercise would have benefitted from more political inputs from Washington and more timely response from Washington to political consultations."

Electronic communication between the United States and NATO was also difficult. NATO communications equipment rejected forty-eight percent (251 out of 522) of teletype communications sent from the Pentagon to NATO headquarters in Belgium. This was due primarily to "the need for data security differences in national military force structure, doctrine, and tactics."

Forebodingly, the slides included a warning that "US nuclear play caused confusion" and an admonition of a "possible lack of adequate control on nuclear procedures."

Document 3: "Autumn Forge 83 - COMALF [Commander Airlift Forces] Briefing," September 9, 1983, Unclassified.

Source: *History of the 322nd Airlift Division, January 1982 - December 1983, Volume VII Supporting Documents, Prepared by Edgar P. Sneed, Division Historian, Unclassified. Released under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA).*

At the onset of Autumn Forge 83, Air Force Lieutenant General Robert F. Coverdale conducted a briefing that provided the Air Force with "an overview of the European theater concept of operations for the Autumn Forge series of exercises," including Reforger 83 and Able Archer 83. Autumn Forge 83 would place an emphasis on the Air Force's use of "highly mobile mini-computers" and "automated data transfers" to "be able to react quickly to changing situations, pass voluminous data between MAC [Military Airlift Command] agencies and our users."

Document 4: "Autumn Forge 83 - Final After Action Report," February 1, 1984, For Official Use Only.

Source: *437 Military Airlift Wing Charleston A.F.B., S.C. History: 1 January -31 March 1984 Vol 2. Supporting documents, released under FOIA.*

The Military Air Lift Command's after-action report states that "Autumn Forge 83 was an umbrella title that included exercises



Reforger, Cold Fire, Crested Cap, Display Determination, and Oksoboel." Although the report did not mention Able Archer 83 (Military Airlift Command practiced deploying soldiers only for a conventional war, not for testing nuclear procedures), it does state that its deployments to Europe lasted until November 15.

An attached March 1984 *Air Man* article entitled "For Military Air Lift Command units, the annual Reforger exercise means ... Moving the Forces of War," provided a vivid description of Reforger 83 and Autumn Forge 83. Reforger was the largest exercise under the Autumn Forge 83 "umbrella." It consisted mainly of the air lift of 16,044 US troops to Europe (84 percent of the total US troops that participated in Autumn Forge 83). In addition to American soldiers, *Air Man* reported the massive overarching European war games included "40,000 American, Dutch, German, British, and Canadian military members and tons of equipment."

The *Air Man* article reported that Reforger required eight days of radio silent Atlantic crossings, which delivered more than 16,000 U.S. Army troops to Europe. It also stated that this was the first exercise which used a computer to plot aircraft operations. Maj. Gen. William Overacker, MAC's top general in Europe, described the objectives of Reforger as "both political and military." He also said, "The series of exercises are watched very carefully by the Eastern Bloc nations, just as we try to watch their exercises as closely as we can, to learn tactics and procedures."



From *Air Man*, tanks cross a bridge during the war game.

Document 5: US Air Force 7th Air Division telegram, "Exercise Able Archer 83 Participation," 23 December 1982 and related "exhibits," Secret.

Source: *History of the Headquarters, 7th Air Division 1 October 1983 - 31 March 1984*, Secret released under FOIA.

A Seventh Air Division telegram on the planning of the operation reported on the "apparent shift in exercise objectives" of Able Archer 83 from previous Able Archer exercises to include "quote low spectrum unquote nuclear play exercised as conventional operations continue" (Air Force's wording). Therefore the Strategic Air Command (SAC), based at Ramstein Air Force base in Germany provided a "response cell" to participate in the war game.

SAC provided nine officers for Able Archer 83 from five locations (SHAPE, AFNORTH, AFCENT, ERWIN and the UK RAOC). "The primary test of the exercise is to test procedures" not "actual fragging of SAC assets" by the cells, although, "that [did not] preclude Able Archer 83 participants from simulating B-52/KC-135 employment IAW [in accordance with] SACEUR OPLAN 10604 Fancy Girl."

Although the details of OPLAN Fancy Girl remain unknown, it was an Air Force commander's plan for operations conducted in a hostile environment, in this case ostensibly against Soviet and Warsaw Pact forces in Europe.

NATO UNCLASSIFIED

Exercise Scenario

Change in leadership in ORANGE in February 1983. Criticism of policies of old government for allowing West to gain new influence in the Third World, especially the Gulf states and for failing to prevent the BLUE decision to modernise Western theatre nuclear forces in Europe.

March 1983: Continuing Iran-Iraq War, with ORANGE providing political support and some arms deliveries to Iran. Also arms deliveries to Syria and South Yemen. US expresses deep concern.

April 1983: Gulf States feel threatened by growing ORANGE involvement in the area, seek US military aid. US sends military advisors and increases naval presence.

May 1983: growing unrest in Eastern Europe

June 1983: ORANGE unable to keep its economic aid promises to Eastern Europe. Unrest increases. Also pro-ORANGE political party and pressure groups in Finland campaign against the government's policies and calls for closer alignment with ORANGE.

July 1983: ORANGE steps up propaganda campaign against the West.

August 1983: ORANGE condemns US military presence and naval deployments in the Gulf area.

August 1983: Internal situation in Yugoslavia worsens; central government faces strong challenges from pro-ORANGE elements. Major disturbances take place in Kosovo, with strong indications of an Albanian role in this unrest. Yugoslav Government approaches several Allied countries with requests for economic and military assistance.

Worsening political situation is matched by considerable increase in ORANGE military activity after the new government comes to power in February 1983. Frequent field training exercises, stockpiling of equipment, increased activity in naval dockyards, factories go on round-the-clock production.

September 1983: heavy ORANGE pressure on Finland, Northern Region NATO countries and Yugoslavia.

18 September: mobilisation exercises begin in ORANGE.

Early October – forward deployment of military aircraft. ORANGE forces around Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia are at high state of readiness.

31 October – ORANGE and ORANGE Bloc forces invade Yugoslavia.

3 November – ORANGE forces cross the Finnish border.

4 November (E-3 = Three days before start of the exercise) massive air and naval attacks against BLUE installations and ORANGE invades Norway. ORANGE forces also

cross Inner German Border, and ORANGE forces also cross into Greece while naval forces conduct attacks in the Adriatic, Mediterranean and Black Seas.

5 Nov (E-2) ORANGE leadership decides to use Chemical weapons against BLUE on 6 Nov (E-1).

Document 6a: "Exercise Able Archer 83: Information from SHAPE Historical Files," March 28, 2013, and Document 6b: "Exercise Scenario," Undated, NATO Unclassified

Source: Kindly provided by SHAPE chief historian Gregory Pedlow.

SHAPE recently produced an unclassified six-page summary of Exercise Able Archer 83 in response to requests from researchers, in order to summarize the still-classified record. As the specifics of Able Archer 83 have been the subject of 25 years of mystery, conjecture and speculation, the SHAPE report deserves extensive quotation:

"Exercise Able Archer was held from 7-11 November 1983. It was an annual Command Post Exercise (thus involving only headquarters, not troops on the ground) of NATO's Allied Command Europe (ACE), and it was designed to practice command and staff procedures, with a particular emphasis on the transition from conventional to non-conventional operations, including the use of nuclear weapons. Overall responsibility for the exercise lay with the Supreme Command Allied Powers Europe (SACEUR). The participants in the exercise were SACEUR's own headquarters SHAPE (Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe), its immediate subordinate headquarters known as Major Subordinate Commands, their subordinates known as Principal Subordinate Commands, and other lower-level War Headquarters throughout ACE ... "

"The exercise scenario began with Orange (the hypothetical opponent) opening hostilities in all regions of ACE on 4 November (three days before the start of the exercise) and Blue (NATO) declaring a general alert. Orange initiated the use of chemical weapons on 6 November and by the end of that day had used such weapons throughout ACE. All of these events had taken place prior to the start of the exercise and were simply part of the written scenario. There had thus been three days of fighting and a deteriorating situation prior to the start of the exercise. This was desired because — as previously stated — the purpose of the exercise was to test procedures for transitioning from conventional to nuclear operations. As a result of Orange advance, its persistent use of chemical weapons, and its clear intentions to rapidly commit second echelon forces, SACEUR requested political guidance

on the use of nuclear weapons early on Day 1 of the exercise (7 November 1983)..."

"Blue's use of nuclear weapons did not stop Orange's aggression. Therefore, SACEUR requested follow-on use of nuclear weapons late on 9 November. This request was approved in the afternoon of 10 November and follow-on use of nuclear weapons was executed on the morning of 11 November. That was the final day of the exercise, which ended in accordance with the long-planned schedule."

The summary also lists the units whose headquarters participated in Able Archer 83. Response cells from the United States, United Kingdom, and NATO (no other nations) participated in the exercise. The Joint Chiefs of Staff in the US and Ministry of Defense in the UK participated "with small response cells." The NATO response cell was simulated by the Exercise Directing Staff.

The NATO summary concludes by stating the historian interviewed "a number of senior participants in Exercise Able Archer 83" in 2006 and that "none of them recalled any 'war scare' or even unusual Soviet reaction to the exercise. Air Chief Marshal Sir Peter Terry, the Deputy SACEUR who played the role of SACEUR during Able Archer 83, stated quite categorically that 'no such scare arose at that time.'"

The summary does not mention or refute the accounts published in the CIA's *Studies in Intelligence* or the May 1984 Special National Intelligence Estimate which reported the "Assumption by Soviet air units in Germany and Poland from [date redacted] November 1983 of high alert status with readying of nuclear strike forces as NATO conducted 'Able Archer 83' a nuclear release command post exercise."^[3] The Archive's third and final War Scare posting will include declassified US Department of State documents showing that the US "sanitized" (removed) references to these Soviet responses to Able Archer 83 in the intelligence reports they shared with their NATO allies.

To SHAPE, the Soviets were "huffing and puffing" (to borrow President Reagan's phrase) in late 1983, and were not genuinely afraid of a NATO nuclear first strike.

~~SECRET~~

SACEUR Exercise ABLE ARCHER 83 (U)

After Action Report (U)

I. (U) General.

A. ~~SECRET~~ ABLE ARCHER (AA) is an annual SACEUR-sponsored Allied Command Europe CPX to practice command and control procedures with particular emphasis on the transition from purely conventional operations to chemical, nuclear and conventional operations. It is the culmination of SACEUR's annual AUTUMN FORGE exercise series.

B. ~~SECRET~~ ABLE ARCHER 83 was conducted 7-11 Nov 83 with three days of "low spectrum" conventional play followed by two days of "high spectrum" nuclear warfare. Due to the low spectrum lead-in for AA 83, SAC was invited to provide liaison officers/advisors to observe and comment on operation of B-52 and KC-135 assets in accordance with SACEUR OPLANs 10604, FANCY GIRL and 10605, GOLDEN EAGLE.

C. (U) SAC Participation (Background)

1. ~~SECRET~~ SAC participated in a previous AA with two observers. Due to the nature of the exercise and the possible political implications or inferences of B-52 involvement, future SAC participation was discouraged.

2. ~~SECRET~~ SHAPE announced that AA 83 scenario had been changed to include three days of low spectrum activity and requested that SAC take an active part in the exercise. SAC proposed sending a team of two observers to each MSC, SHAPE and UK RAOC. SHAPE accepted this proposal, with the understanding that personnel were to act as observers/advisors to the staff at each level. A description of ADVON activities at these locations is contained in Section II.

D. (U) SAC objectives for ABLE ARCHER 83 were to:

1. ~~SECRET~~ Observe NATO play of B-52 and KC-135 employment in accordance with SACEUR OPLANs.
2. (U) Determine if future participation is warranted, and if so, to what extent.
3. (U) Interface with SACEUR and MSC War Headquarters' staffs for mutual education.
4. (U) Update location guides.

E. (U) SAC ADVON composition for ABLE ARCHER 83 was as follows:

1. (U) AFNORTH:
 - Maj Paul J. Erbacher, 7AD/DOO, Bomber Planner
 - Maj Arunas Siulte, 7AD/DOS, Tanker Planner

~~SECRET~~

The December 1, 1983, "Exercise Able Archer 83 After Action Report" provides details of the war game that spanned from Norway to the Crimea.

Document 7: Air Force Seventh Air Division, Ramstein Air Force Base, "Exercise Able Archer 83, SAC ADVON, After Action Report," December 1, 1983, Secret NOFORN.

Source: US Air Force FOIA release.

The March 2013 SHAPE summary (see previous document) reports that "few further details are available on the actual course of the exercise — the various incidents that were simulated, the messages sent/received — because this kind of exercise material was not preserved in the archives." Fortunately, a recently declassified 17-page after-action report prepared by the Seventh Air Division provides a

thorough summary of the "on the ground action," as reported by aircrews during Able Archer 83. The report elaborates on the SHAPE summary, describing three days of "low spectrum" conventional play followed by two days of "high spectrum" nuclear warfare. "Due to the low spectrum lead-in for AA 83, SAC was invited to provide liaison officers/advisors to observe and comment on the operation of B-52 and KC-135 assets in accordance with SACEUR OPLANs 10604, FANCY GIRL and 10605, GOLDEN EAGLE." The details of 10605 GOLDEN EAGLE remain unknown, but like FANCY GIRL (see above) constitute Air Force plans for operations in a hostile environment.^[4]

The after-action report confirms that the war game spanned from Norway (low altitude attacks on the Kola Peninsula would have been more effective than high altitude attacks) through Germany ("Orange Forces were attacking along the entire German border with air attacks"), to the United Kingdom ("OR attacks on UK airfields disrupted B-52 and KC-135 operations as well as destroying some aircraft"), Bulgaria (a coordinated B-52 and Fighter attack on Varna and Burgas airfields), and the Crimea (F-111 attacks).

The SHAPE summary states that "one of the things that was practiced during the exercise was shifting command from Permanent War Headquarters to the Alternate War Headquarters" and that "there was apparently some movement into the field." The Air Force's after-action report fills in these gaps.

"Orange conducted chemical attacks throughout the exercise," the Air Force report states. Because of this, war gamers "were directed to go to the Alternate War HQ (CREST-HIGH)" at Heinrich Hertz Kaserne in Birkenfeld. There, "helmets, gas masks and chemical suits" were worn by actors.

The Blue side also utilized "unconventional warfare personnel" which were "inserted" into Orange target areas to pass information to war planners to pass "updated DMPI" (designated mean point of impact, that is, targeting data) to war planners for "the maximum effectiveness of the sortie." "Beacon bombing"(presumably rather than conventional "radar bombing") was also discussed, but not used.

At one point, on November 11, eight KC-135 Stratotankers in the United Kingdom were "launched for survival," likely in response to a simulated Orange nuclear attack. The SHAPE summary states that

Blue conducted a simulated nuclear attack that same day.

The key difference between the SHAPE summary and the Air Force after-action report is the NATO summary's omission of the fact that Able Archer 83 was the finale of a simulated land war in Europe, including as many as 40,000 troops (19,000 Americans). This was apparent to the Air Force, which called Able Archer the "culmination" of both Autumn Forge 83 and Reforger 83. While actual troops and units did not participate in Able Archer 83, they certainly did in the conventional war games simulating a land war in Europe, the "culmination" of which was Able Archer 83's simulated nuclear release.

Importantly, the after-action report states that there was "a SACEUR decision" before the beginning of the exercise "to reduce the level of nuclear exchange between Blue and Orange." The after-action Report does not disclose the reason why SACEUR decided to reduce the nuclear exchange element of the exercise; the SHAPE summary states that "because the exercise scenario began at a low crisis level, there was actually less nuclear play than in previous years."

The after-action report includes one startling observation: "The presence of the SAC ADVON [an advance echelon vanguard], especially in large numbers for an exercise of this nature, raises a sensitive, political issue concerning the role of the B-52. One may see an implication or make the inference that if B-52 aircraft are present in a nuclear scenario exercise, are they being used to perform strike missions? Numerous times during the exercise the word "strike" was used in reference to B-52 sorties. While this is an obvious slip of the tongue and was quickly corrected, in most cases, it does serve to fuel any inference should a remark be made in a nonsecure environment. A large, if not fully manned, ADVON team which would be required to properly support ABLE ARCHER, being deployed to the many locations would only again give rise to speculation about the B-52 role."



Ground crews race toward an A-10 to prepare it for another sortie. From *Air Man*.

Document 8: KGB Headquarters Moscow to the London KGB Residency, "Ref no. 1673/PR of 24.10.83," November 5, 1983, Top Secret.

Source: Christopher Andrew and Oleg Gordievsky, *Comrade Kryuchkov's Instructions: Top Secret Files on KGB Foreign Operations, 1975-1985*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press 1991) 86-87.

The primary source for the British and American intelligence agencies' attention to the War Scare was MI6 asset Oleg Gordievsky, who became a KGB *resident* in London in June of 1982. He reported that the Soviet leadership may have feared an imminent attack during Able Archer 83. (The CIA's discussion of his *bona fides* is included in the previous EBB in this series.)

Gordievsky also became an important source for historians studying the War Scare. He worked with British historian of intelligence Christopher Andrew to write several books, which included key Soviet documents and shared his recollections of the War Scare, Operation RYaN, and Able Archer 83 after his 1985 defection.^[5]

According to the documents published by Gordievsky, on November 5, 1983, Moscow Center sent the London residency a telegram that opened by stating, "In response to your request we are sending you the information which the Centre has regarding possible Operations by the USA and its allies on British territory in preparations for RYaN." ^[6]

The telegram continued, "surprise is the key element in the main adversary's [United States'] plans and preparations for war in today's conditions. As a result it can be assumed that the period of time from the moment when the preliminary decision for RYaN is taken, up to the order to deliver the strike will be of very short duration, possibly 7-10 days." The Center instructed agents to monitor "possible contacts and consultations between the United States government and British leadership," (including at 13 Ministry of Defense buildings), and warned them to watch for "announcements of military alert in units and at bases," and the "appearance of new channels of communications." The beginning of Able Archer 83 included at least some of these indicators. Presumably an apt intelligence officer would have concluded, as did Gordievsky, that despite these indicators Able Archer 83 was in all likelihood a nuclear drill.

Then, Gordievsky writes, on November 8 or 9, he "was not sure which," flash telegrams were sent to both KGB and GRU residencies in Western Europe reporting "an alert on US bases."^[7] The flash telegrams "clearly implied that one of several possible explanations for the (non-existent) alert was that the countdown to a nuclear first strike had actually begun."

According to the SHAPE summary, the morning of November 8 was when SACEUR requested "initial limited use of nuclear weapons against pre-selected fixed targets. Request [was] approved by political authorities (being simulated by response cells [including "small cells" in the UK and US]) in the evening, and the weapons were employed on the morning of 9 November."

Of course, there were no plans for a Western first strike. But as General Secretary Yuri Andropov told the US envoy Averell Harriman in June 1983, the tense relations between superpowers (and six-minute nuclear response times) meant that the miscalculation of a nonexistent attack could still present a genuine danger.

Additionally, Soviet military doctrine held that a nuclear attack could be effectively obscured by war games or military exercises.^[8]

Document 9: US Air Force Military Airlift Command "Reforger 83\Crested Cap 83\Display Determination 83\Autumn Forge 83

**After Act
Report,"
December
8, 1983,**



A soldier takes a rest break during Autumn Forge 83 — in a gas mask. From *Air Man*.

Confidential.

Source: *History of Military Airlift Command: 1 January - 31 December 1983: Supporting Documents Volume IX*, Confidential. Released under FOIA.

The Military Airlift Command's after-action report tells that 19,000 troops and 1,500 tons of cargo were sent to Europe over the course of 172 missions during Autumn Forge 1983. Of these, 16,044 troops were deployed during Reforger 83. As Able Archer 83 was conducted, a "surge" of military personnel had created a significant addition to the NATO foot print in Europe.

Document 10: Commander in Chief, United States Army, Europe (CINCUSAREUR) "Reforger 83 After Action Report," March 6, 1984, Confidential.

Source: Department of Defense, Washington Headquarters Services, Mandatory Declassification Review release.

CINCUSAREUR's 200-page after-action report of Reforger 83 states that it was the fifteenth Reforger exercise, and provides a comprehensive list of the units that participated. The major participants were the 3rd US Corps Battle Staff; 1st Cavalry Division,

3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment; 1st Battalion, 75th Infantry (Ranger); and the 1st Battalion, 198th Armor (MS ARNG) [Mississippi National Guard].

The report also states that 27 people observed Reforger 83 under the provisions of the "Confidence Building Measures" provision of the Helsinki Pact of 1975, but does not report which countries these observers were from.

Document 11: US Air Force *History of the Headquarters, Seventh Air Division 1 October 1983 - 31 March 1984, Narrative*, by Charles E. Arnold, TSgt, USAF Historian, September 20, 1984, (Excerpt) Secret.

Source: US Air Force FOIA release.

The official history of the headquarters of the Seventh Air Division, based at Ramstein Air Force base in West Germany, links Able Archer 83 to Reforger 83, stating "the annual SACEUR-sponsored Exercise Able Archer ... culminated the large scale Reforger series of live exercises and emphasized the transition from conventional to chemical and nuclear operations." The history also notes that Able Archer 83 was different from past exercises because it included "a newly developed conventional build-up portion." Despite this "conventional build-up portion," the SAC history records that Able Archer 83 "remained primarily a nuclear procedures exercise."

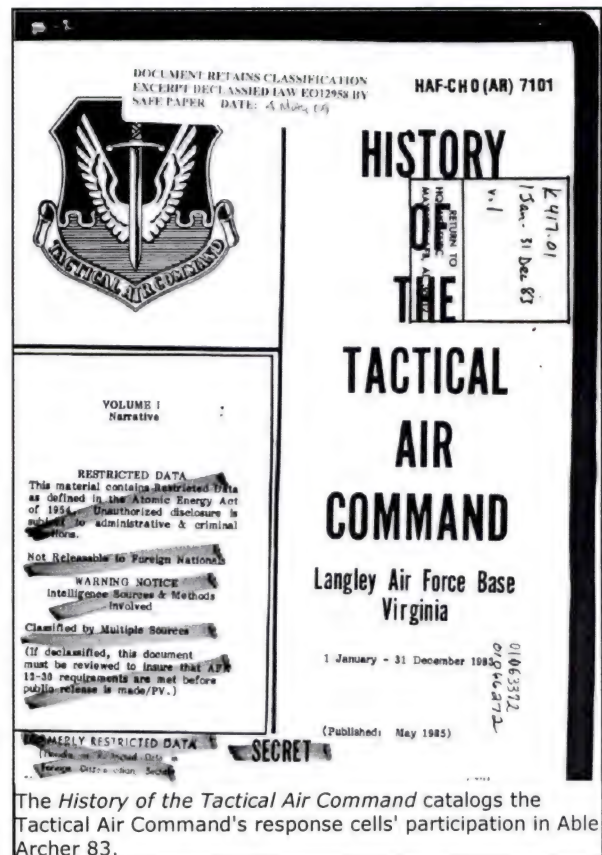
Document 12: *History of the Tactical Air Command, Langley Air Force Base, Virginia: 1 January - 31 December 1983, Volume I Narrative*, May 1985, Secret.

Source: US Air Force FOIA release.

The Tactical Air Command also participated in Able Archer 83. Its history states that on November 7 "Able Archer 83, a JCS-coordinated, USCINCEUR-sponsored CPX to practice command and staff procedures, was initiated at various command posts. TAC response cells participated." No other Tactical Air Command

documents have been released.

The Navy and Army also participated in Able Archer 83 (including elements of the III Corps battle staff, 1st Cav Div, 3rd ACR, 1st BN 75 Rangers), but unlike the Air Force or Department of Defense Washington Headquarters Services, those DOD components have not yet provided documents in response to FOIA requests.



Document 13: U.S

Congress, House of Representatives, Hearing before the Defense Subcommittee of the Committee on Appropriations, *Department of Defense Appropriations for 1986*, Ninety-Ninth Congress, First Session, March 27, 1985, Unclassified.

Source: Congressional Record.

During a March 27, 1985 congressional hearing, USAF Brig. Gen. Mark J. Worrick provided the subcommittee with information on the Air Force's operations and maintenance costs. Among his evidence was a list of JCS-directed and coordinated exercises and their associated costs that were submitted for the FY85/FY86 President's Budget. The list also provides the budgeted and actual costs for FY84 exercises, and notes that in FY84 Able Archer 83 cost \$111 million, and Reforger 83 cost \$2.407 billion, for a total of \$2.518 billion.

Document 14: Unpublished Interview with former Soviet Head of General Staff Marshal Sergei Akhromeyev, January 10, 1990.

Source: Princeton University, Mudd Manuscript Library, Don Oberdorfer Papers 1983-1990, Series 1, Soviet Interviews, 1990.

This interview between *Washington Post* journalist Don Oberdorfer and the former head of the Soviet General Staff, Marshal Sergei Akhromeyev, exposes a key historiographical problem in the study of the "Able Archer 83" War Scare. The NATO exercise was not known as "Able Archer 83" to Soviet intelligence as it was being conducted. Soviet analysts have referred to it as "Autumn Forge 83,"



Three of the 3,500 tanks and armored personnel carriers used during Autumn Forge roll through Stockhusen, Germany, from *Air Man*.

the name for the larger, months-long, umbrella exercise of which Able Archer was the conclusion. The US military establishment usually referred to Able Archer 83 as "Reforger 83," the name for the military lift operation at the end of "Autumn Forge 83" where the US moved its troops to Europe to prepare for a conventional war. According to the declassified Military Airlift Command after-action report included in this EBB, 16,044 of the 19,000 troops deployed to Europe for Autumn Forge 83 (84 percent) were deployed during Reforger 83.

"Able Archer 83" was in fact the NATO command post nuclear exercise at the tail end of both Autumn Forge and Reforger.^[9] Both exercises "culminated" when a conventional land war with the "Orange Pact" over Europe turned nuclear.

In a key exchange of this 1990 interview, Akhromeyev tells Oberdorfer that he did not remember "Able Archer 83" but that "we

believed the most dangerous military exercises are [were] Autumn Forge and Reforger. These are [were] the NATO exercise in Europe."

While Akhromeyev states that he felt no "immediate threat of war," he adds: "I must tell you that I personally and many of the people that I know had a different opinion of the United States in 1983 than I have today [1990]. I considered that the United States is [was] pressing for world supremacy ... And I considered that as a result of this situation there can [could] be a war between the Soviet Union and the United States on the initiative of the United States." [10]

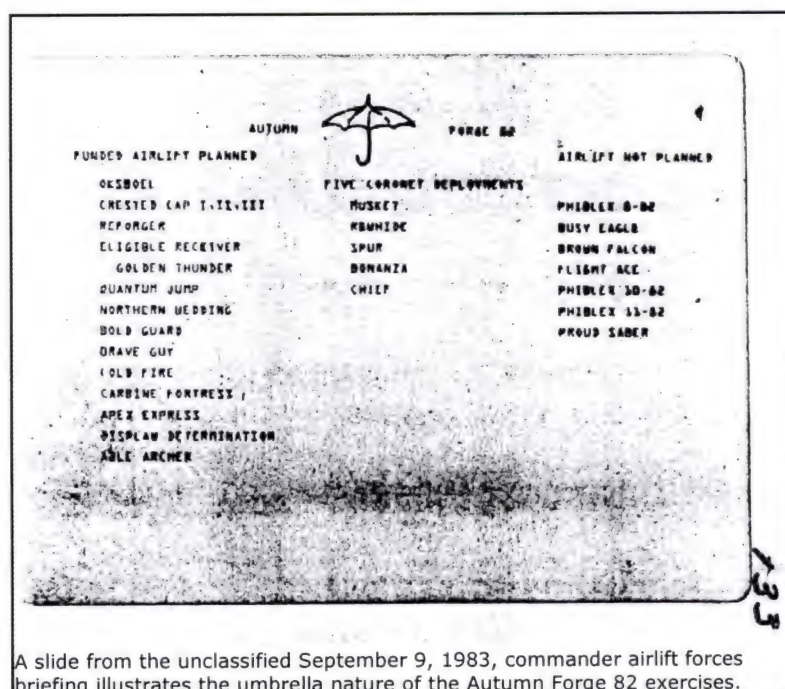
Document 15: Unpublished Interview with former Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger, October 18, 1989.

Source: Princeton University, Mudd Manuscript Library, Don Oberdorfer Papers 1983-1990, Series 3, Research Documents Files.

In an interview with Don Oberdorfer, former Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger said that Able Archer 83 "involved the timing of the release of nuclear weapons, the chain of command -who would have the authority, how quickly could it come back here and go back over there-all that sort of thing. It was a standard exercise."

He does, however, lend credence to Soviet Marshal Akhromeyev's feeling that these large military exercises -specifically Autumn Forge and Reforger- were "the most dangerous." "But I do remember," Weinberger continued, "and I do know, because I felt the same way on our side - that it is sometimes quite difficult to tell the difference between an exercise and the beginning - the raising of indicators that we watch all the time every day, every hour." He cited his anxiety over a North Korean exercise because: "they were moving a hell of a lot of stuff in position and everybody knew it was just a maneuver and it was an annual exercise, but I got quite alarmed, because I kept saying 'What if it isn't? We've lost about five days of time.' So the difference between a realistic exercise or maneuver and what could be preparations for an attack, that line is sometimes quite blurred."

Document
16:



A slide from the unclassified September 9, 1983, commander airlift forces briefing illustrates the umbrella nature of the Autumn Forge 82 exercises.

Unpublished Interview with former National Security Advisor Robert McFarlane, undated but in 1989 or 1990.

Source: Princeton University, Mudd Manuscript Library, Don Oberdorfer Papers 1983-1990, Series 3, Research Documents Files.

McFarlane describes the nuclear aspect of Able Archer 83 to Oberdorfer as "very rare ... We've always had Reforger and Crested Cap for a generation. But this kind of thing where you go through the escalatory steps to general war — I don't remember any since the '60s in fact."

McFarlane also repeated the controversial claim that someone, "probably Vic Boverie and the Defense people ... rais[ed] a concern that in the context of other reports we had had of anxiety on the part of the Russians, that for us to conduct an exercise like this with principals in place could be alarming. And I thought that was a valid concern."

McFarlane continued: "And I talked to Cap [Weinberger] about it and Cap agreed that there ought to be some very obvious missing players and other ways of telling that this was clearly an exercise, and did [that]. And there were, I think if you'll check back, some folks, notably the President, Vice President and the Chiefs [who did not participate], one of the commanders in EUCOM wasn't playing."

This assertion has received much push back. In his interview, Weinberger stated that "I don't remember anything about that. McFarlane's memory — I guess the kindest way to phrase it — exceeds mine in many instances."^[11]

Documents the National Security Archive has obtained mention only the participation of a "small" Joint Chiefs of Staff cell in Washington, though the Seventh Air Division's after-action report of Able Archer 83 did note, "a SACEUR decision ... to reduce to the level of nuclear exchange between Blue and Orange."

This and many other questions will likely not be resolved until the declassification of additional materials known to exist. One notable item is the comprehensive President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board report on the War Scare, authored by Nina Stewart, which continues to languish at the George H. W. Bush Presidential Library, despite being requested under FOIA by the National Security Archive in 2004 — a victim of our nation's broken declassification system.^[12]

Document
17: Office
of the
Secretary
of
Defense,



The Port of Rotterdam welcomes Reforger 83. From *Air Man*.

Memorandum From Deputy Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, "Subject: Significant Military Exercise NIGHT TRAIN 84," December 8, 1983, Secret.

Source: Reagan Presidential Library, Jack Matlock Files, b. 2 [90888], f: "Matlock Chron Dec 1983 (1 of 2) .

A coda to the declassified descriptions of Exercises Autumn Forge 83, Reforger 83 and Able Archer 83 is this December 8, 1983 memo from General Colin Powell, then military assistant to the Secretary of Defense. Powell was writing about the upcoming US-Canadian military exercise Night Train 84, conducted from 5-13 April 1984.

In his memo, Powell warned, "Conduct of a worldwide nuclear exercise could show strength of purpose. On the other hand, it could be perceived as showing an intent for use of nuclear weapons. It could have the potential to affect US/USSR strategic arms reduction negotiations or bilateral US/USSR strategic arms reduction negotiations or bilateral US/USSR summit preparations should either of these be in progress."

No analogous brief has been found for Autumn Forge 83, Reforger 83, or Able Archer 83.

The final War Scare Electronic Briefing Book will present the US intelligence community's analysis of the 1983 episode, including three declassified reports composed in the aftermath of Able Archer 83 in which the intelligence agencies, which had previously largely concluded that Soviet political and military leaders were "huffing and puffing" and did not genuinely fear war with the United States, now began to recognize "a dimension of genuineness to the Soviet expressions of concern."

NOTES

[1] Christopher Andrew and Oleg Gordievsky, *Comrade Kryuchkov's Instructions: Top Secret Files on KGB Foreign Operations, 1975-1985*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press 1991), 86.

[2] C3 appears to refer to the NATO definition of "consultation, command, and control" rather than the DOD definition of "command, control, and communications."

[3] The next War Scare Electronic Briefing Book will focus on US Intelligence Community analyses of the War Scare.

[4] See <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/ops/oplan.htm>

[5] Gordievsky incorrectly identifies the date that Able Archer began as November 2, 1983, rather than November 7, 1983, as reported by the US Air Force after-action reports. More recent research has asserted Able Archer 83 began on November 4, 1983, but this is also incorrect. Gregory Pedlow, chief historian of the SHAPE historical division, confirms that Able Archer 83 began on November 7, 1983. There was however, "a written scenario (not part of the actual exercise) which began on 4 November 4with Orange's use of chemical weapons."

[6] Importantly, this document — unlike others reproduced in the book — does not include a Russian facsimile. It is typeset and translated into English with no Russian corroboration of authenticity.

[7] Regrettably, no text of the November 8 or 9 flash telegram has been released or reproduced. Gordievsky's revelation of this warning is the only basis for the current historical record (though the preceding and following telegrams which he reproduced and published do serve as somewhat sturdy *bona fides*).

[8] A. A. Sidorenko, *The Offensive (A Soviet View)* (Washington DC: US Government Printing Office, 1970), 115. The United States also feared that exercises could be used as "ruses of war." See Caspar Weinberger interview in this EBB.

[9] See also, Colonel L. V. Levadov, "*Itogi operativnoi podgotovki obedinennykh sil NATO v 1983 godu*" (Results of the Operational Training of NATO Joint Armed Forces in 1983," *Voyennaya Misl'* (Military Thought), no. 2 (February 1984).

[10] This (and other) Soviet statements of alarm at least partially contradict the assertion of Wojtech Mastny (and others) that, "[n]o high-ranking Soviet official in a position to know, including such a key figure as the first deputy chief (and later chief) of the Soviet General Staff Marshal Sergei F. Akhromeyev, has been found who remembers any alarm being raised because of the NATO exercise." See Wojtech Mastny, "How Able Was 'Able Archer'? Nuclear Trigger and Intelligence in Perspective," *Journal of Cold War Studies*, Volume 11, Number 1, Winter 2009, 119. Marshal Akhromeyev did keep a journal that is not currently available to researchers.

[11] Gregory Pedlow, chief SHAPE historian, wrote that "There was

... no involvement of national leaders in the exercise, and no such involvement was ever planned, despite some recent allegations to this effect."

[12] The report is stored at George H.W. Bush Presidential Library, Presidential Records, PFIAB, folder title: "Reports to the President - War Scare Report 1990," OA/ID box number is CF01830-020. The Library has been of assistance in trying to win this document's release, but its continued unavailability reflects on the state of declassification today. In this case, the problem lies with an "unnamed agency" that will not allow the Library (part of the National Archives and Records Administration) to perform a declassification review, despite that "unnamed agency" failing to complete its own review since the National Security Archive requested the document in 2004. In 2012, the National Security Archive asked the "FOIA Ombudsman," the Office of Government Information Services (OGIS), for help in determining the name of the "unnamed agency" negligent in reviewing the document. But OGIS seemed to support the contention that an agency reviewing a decades-old document could remain anonymous, writing that, "In exceptional circumstances, when a referral pertains to the involvement of an intelligence community agency and the involvement of that agency is itself classified, the name of the agency may be withheld under Executive Order 13526 regarding Classified National Security Information ... Your case involves a classified document and, as such, appears to fall into these exceptional circumstances." Because we do not know the name of the agency which is stymieing this document's declassification, the National Security Archive is anxiously waiting for this case to come before the Interagency Security Classification Appeals Panel (ISCAP), housed at NARA, which we sometimes call (in the spirit of gallows' humor) "the secrecy court of last resort." Fritz Ermarth, the primary author of the CIA's 1984 initial Special National Intelligence Estimate on the War Scare has written, "If it hasn't already been, [the PFIAB] report should be declassified as much as possible ... the historical work done since then suggests [it] had a point, and it is worth pursuing further." (See Fritz Ermarth, "Observations on the "War Scare of 1983 From an Intelligence Perch," for the Parallel History Project on NATO and the Warsaw Pact, November 6, 2003.) The next War Scare posting will include an interview with one of this elusive PFIAB report's authors, describing the content and conclusions of the report.

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A photograph of President Reagan meeting Soviet double-agent Oleg Gordievsky taken on July 21, 1987. From "A Cold War Conundrum" in the CIA's *Studies in Intelligence*.

The 1983 War Scare: "The Last Paroxysm" of the Cold War Part III

Part III: "Rather Stunning Array of Indicators" of the Soviet Reaction to Able Archer 83 had "A Dimension of Genuineness ... Often Not Reflected in Intelligence Issuances."

National Security Archive
Electronic Briefing Book
No. 428

PART 3 OF 3 POSTINGS

Posted – May 22, 2013

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War Scare, Part 3






Nate Jones describes the third War Scare posting.

intelligence community during the 1983 War Scare and concluded — although the intelligence community remained divided — that "maybe they [the Soviets] are scared of us & think we are a threat. I'd like to go face to face & explore this with them," according to documents posted today by the National Security Archive (www.nsarchive.org).

To mark the 30th anniversary of the War Scare, the National Security Archive has posted, over three installments, the most complete online collection of declassified U.S. documents, material from the now-closed Russian archives, and contemporary interviews on the 1983 War Scare. Earlier postings examined Soviet claims that they were genuinely fearful of a Western nuclear attack in 1983, and published, for the first time, official NATO and Air Force summaries of Able Archer 83, a NATO nuclear release exercise conducted at the crux of the War Scare that included new elements that raised the possibility of nuclear war "through miscalculation."

Today's final posting examines the U.S. intelligence community's analysis and reaction to data showing that Able Archer 83 spurred "a high level of Soviet military activity, with new deployments of weapons and strike forces." This unprecedented Soviet reaction in turn created a series of introspective U.S. intelligence analyses and counter-analyses, spanning from November 15, 1983 to February 15, 1990,

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debating whether the U.S. intelligence had actually understood Soviet actions, perceptions, and fears — and acknowledging the danger of nuclear "miscalculation" if it had not.

Today's posting includes:

- A



(U) Briefing President Reagan. Clockwise: President Reagan, George Shultz, Robert McFarlane, William Casey, and Caspar Weinberger.

From the National Security Agency's *American Cryptology During the Cold War, 1945 - 1989, Book IV: Cryptologic Rebirth, 1981-1989.*

Department of State document recounting that the United States "sanitized" the Special National Intelligence Estimate (SNIE) on the War Scare, removing all mentions of Able Archer 83 and the Soviet reaction to it, before providing it to NATO. Thus, the U.S. hid the danger of Able Archer 83 from the very allies who participated in the exercise.

- A memorandum from Director of the Central Intelligence Agency William Casey to President Reagan and other Cabinet-level officials warning that "The [Soviet] military behaviors we have observed involve high military costs ... adding thereby a dimension of genuineness to the Soviet expressions of concern that is often not reflected in intelligence issuances."
- A contemporary (December 1983) CIA analysis entitled, "Soviet Thinking on the Possibility of Armed Confrontation with the United States," that asserted Moscow was "playing up the 'war danger'" and that the Soviets did not "anticipate a near-term military confrontation with the United States."
- A formerly unpublished summary of the most extensive (and still classified) analysis of Able Archer 83, a 110-page President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board report to George H.W.

Bush in 1990. According to the report's summary, provided by one of its authors, the "war scare was an expression of a genuine belief on the part of Soviet leaders that US was planning a nuclear first strike, causing Sov[iet] military to prepare for this eventuality, for example by readying forces for a Sov[iet] preemptive strike."

THE DOCUMENTS

Document 1:

Department of Defense and Central Intelligence Agency, "US and Soviet Strategic Forces," Joint Net Assessment, November 14, 1983, Top Secret.

Source: Central Intelligence Agency Freedom of Information Act release.

The first Joint Net Assessment of the Soviet Union, in production for months if not years, was completed just after the conclusion of Able Archer 83. The purpose of the Joint Net Assessment was to present policy makers a comprehensive and

accurate report of current and projected strategic strengths and weaknesses of the Soviet Union and United States.

The Joint Net Assessment found that as of November 1983, "the strategic nuclear balance is probably adequate to deter a direct nuclear



Soldiers prepare to board an aircraft to participate in the war game. From *Air Man*.

attack on the United States or a major attack on Europe." The assessment warned that the most likely threat to U.S. interests would be Soviet exploitation of possible "crises" when they would challenge U.S. interests in "friendly or client state[s] in the Third World," possibly analogous to the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis. This could develop as "a period of crisis, the conventional phase of a theater war, a limited theater nuclear war, [and] large-scale nuclear strikes." This is precisely the nuclear scenario that Exercise Autumn Forge 83 and Able Archer 83 wargamed.

The assessment did not, however, warn of the possibility of nuclear war through Soviet "miscalculation" or errant preemptive strikes, despite "a clear [Soviet] preference for preemption." This may have been because, as the report noted, "there has been limited attention given in our analyses to the factors that the Soviets would regard as most important. An implicit assumption has been that Soviet assessments are similar to our own."

The assessment reported an additional U.S. vulnerability: "We do not know what would convince them [the Soviets] that a US strike was imminent."

Document 2: National Intelligence Council memo for Deputy Under Secretary for Policy General Richard G. Stilwell from Major General Edward B. Atkeson, "Subject: Soviet Use of Historical Data for Operational Analyses," November 23, 1983, Confidential.

Source: CIA Records Search Tool (CREST) database.

On November 15, 1983, four days after the conclusion of Able Archer 83 (and Autumn Forge 83, the 19,000 troop airlift to Europe), Under Secretary of Defense for Policy General Richard Stilwell had a conversation with National Intelligence Officer Major General Edward B. Atkeson about the Soviet use of historical data for operational analyses. While debriefing an earlier nuclear release drill in March 1983, General Stilwell pushed for the participation of "higher level players" in Washington because "bringing a coalition from crisis to war is demanding. We must continue to practice these exercises."

The memo included three documents (a CIA report on "planning norms for Soviet ground forces," a book *Soviet Troop Control*, and an article, "In pursuit of the Essence of War") that analyzed Soviet troop behavior and posturing, which suggests that the U.S. intelligence community was beginning to focus on unusual Soviet behavior in response to Able Archer 83.

"In pursuit of the Essence of War" also included a reference to a Soviet method which "cataloged and computerized" the world's "correlation of forces." The results, it claimed, were "highly objective, empirically provable and readily adaptable to modern data processing." This may have been describing a computer that Gordievsky claimed was housed in the Soviet Ministry of Defense (which the film, 1983 Brink of Apocalypse recreated — with some artistic liberties).

Document

3:

**November
16, 1983**

and

November

18 Diary

Entries by

Ronald

Reagan.

Some



A tank and an armored personnel carrier, just two of the 3,500 used in Autumn Forge, rumble through a small village. From *Air Man*.

information excised by request of the National Security Council.

Source: Ronald Reagan, ed. Douglas Brinkley, *The Reagan Diaries: Volume 1: January 1981-October 1985*, Unabridged, (New York: Harper Collins, 2009).

In an 2009 interview, President Reagan's national security advisor,

Robert McFarlane, recalled that the Soviet reaction to Able Archer 83 was on the president's mind as he travelled through Asia from November 8-14, 1983, and that the two spoke about the situation several times, "on Air Force One and elsewhere."^[1]

On November 16, 1983, two days after his return from Asia, Reagan wrote in his journal that he "met with Geo S. [Secretary of State George Shultz] about establishing a pipe line outside the bureaucracy for direct contact with the Soviets."

Then, on November 18, 1983 President Reagan recorded, "George Shultz & I had a talk mainly about setting up a little in house group of experts on the Soviet U. to help us in setting up some channels. I feel the Soviets are so defense minded, so paranoid about being attacked that without being in any way soft on them we ought to tell them that no one here has any intention of doing anything like that. What the h-
-I have they got that anyone would want."

Document 4: Central Intelligence Agency memo for the Director and Deputy Director from Vice Chairman of the National Intelligence Council Herbert E. Meyer, "Subject: Why is the World So Dangerous?" November 30, 1983.

Source: CIA Records Search Tool (CREST) database.

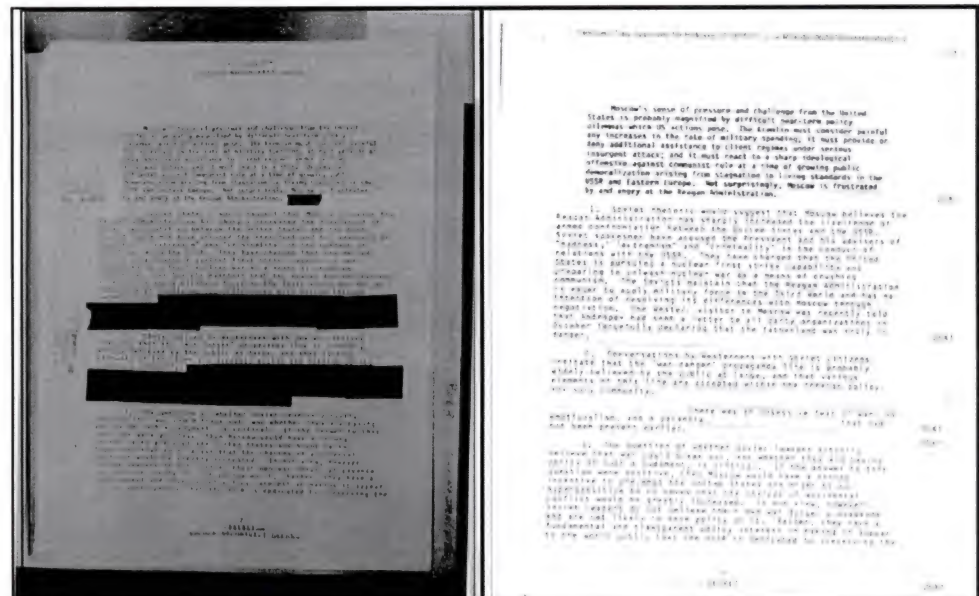
In this colorful missive to CIA leadership, Meyer sets forth an argument that the sharp rise in the global level of violence in late 1983 (including KAL 007, the bombings in Lebanon, and invasion of Grenada) was tied to the Soviet Union's "shattering descent into history."

Among the challenges facing the ailing Soviet Union was the NATO deployment of Pershing II missiles in Europe, which could hit Moscow in about 10 minutes; "roughly how long it takes some of the Kremlin's leaders to get out of their chairs, let alone to their shelters," Meyer wrote.

He predicted that to slow its demise the USSR would "raise the level of violence, thus making the world a more dangerous place," "attribute the increased violence and danger to the inevitable result of reckless

US policies," and "hope that voters will force a change of course."

Though Meyer was writing primarily about the dangers of "conventional" not nuclear war and does not include the risk of war through Soviet miscalculation, he concedes the low possibility, "worrisome enough," that the Soviets "could decide to go for it," possibly even launching "a conventional or nuclear bolt-from-the-blue first strike on Western Europe or perhaps on the US."



Side-by-side images from the CIA's Secret 1983 report on "Soviet Thinking on the Possibility of Armed Confrontation with the United States." Note that in 2010, (image on right) the CIA redacted information which was released in 2003, and that information released in 2010 (including the name of the CIA office that produced the report) should never have been withheld on national security grounds in the first place.

Document 5a, 5b: Central Intelligence Agency Directorate of Intelligence, "Soviet Thinking on the Possibility of Armed Confrontation with the United States," December 30, 1983, Secret, NOFORN.

Source: Ronald Reagan Presidential Library Release and CREST. Two versions with different information redacted.

This CIA analysis states that "contrary to the impression conveyed by Soviet propaganda, Moscow does not appear to anticipate a near-term military confrontation with the United States." Moscow, the CIA's directorate of intelligence believed, was "playing up the 'war danger'" to stop the deployment of intermediate-range nuclear missiles to western Europe, deepen cleavages within the Atlantic alliance, and

increase pressure for a more conciliatory U.S. policy posture toward the USSR.

Despite its conclusion, the report does contain additional indicators of the fear — genuine or ginned up — gripping the Soviet Union in 1983. One western visitor reported "that Andropov had sent a letter to all party organizations in October forcefully declaring that the fatherland was truly in danger." Another reported "an obsessive fear of war, an emotionalism, and a paranoia [redacted] that had not been present earlier."

In addition to providing insight into the War Scare, this document also serves as a continuing example of the inefficiency of the U.S. classification and declassification system. Information redacted in 2010 — including Soviet relations with Syria — had already been declassified and released to the public by the Reagan Library in 2003. Conversely, information withheld in 2003 but released in 2010 — including the name of the CIA office that produced the report — should never have been withheld on "national security grounds" in the first place.

Document 6: Central Intelligence Agency, Special National Intelligence Estimate, "Implications of Recent Soviet Military-Political Activities" May 18, 1984, Top Secret.

Source: Central Intelligence Agency Freedom of Information Act release.

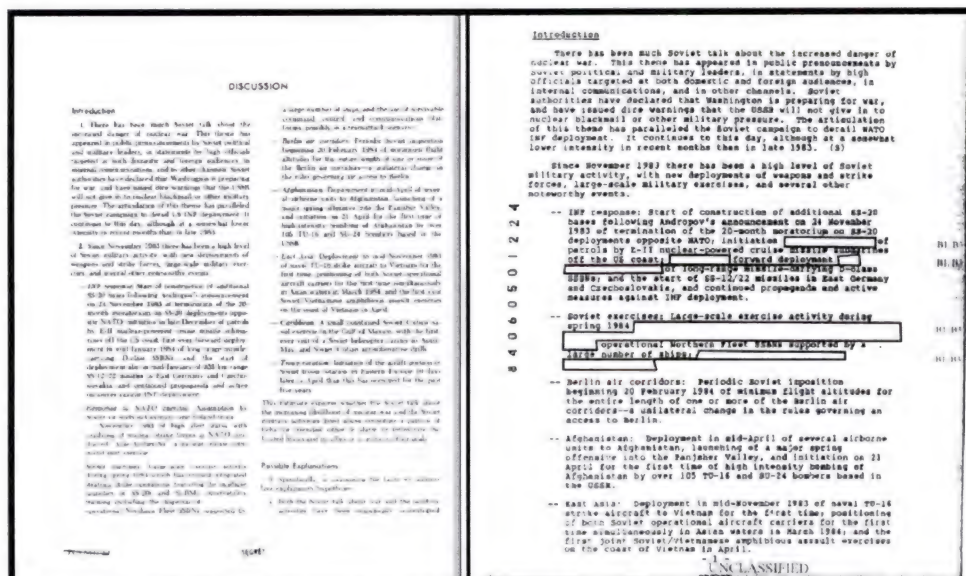
SNIE 11-10-84/JX, authored primarily by the CIA's national intelligence officer for the Soviet Union, Fritz Ermarth, was the first officially declassified document on Able Archer 83 and the War Scare; though some key portions remain redacted, the peeled onion layers of declassification have provided historians with a clearer and clearer view of the CIA's analysis of Able Archer 83. The SNIE concludes that, "We believe strongly that Soviet actions are not inspired by, and Soviet leaders do not perceive, a genuine danger of imminent conflict or confrontation with the United States," but it acknowledges that "since November 1983 there has been a high level of Soviet military activity, with new deployments of weapons and strike forces."

The CIA's estimate reports that these deployments were at least partially in response to Able Archer 83 (it does not mention the 19,000 troops transported to Europe during Reforger 83 and Autumn Forge 83). The estimate stated that Able Archer 83 "was larger than previous 'Able Archer' exercises and included new command, control, and communications procedures for authorizing use of nuclear weapons." The "elaborate" Soviet reaction to this exercise included "increased intelligence collection flights, and the placing of Soviet air units in East Germany and Poland on heightened readiness in what was declared to be a threat of possible aggression against the USSR and Warsaw Pact countries." Two other Soviet reactions to Able Archer 83 remain redacted in the estimate.

One of the estimate's findings is contradicted by declassified documents previously posted by the National Security Archive. This is the assertion that "in private diplomatic exchanges with Moscow over the past six months the Soviets have neither made any direct threats connected with regional or other issues nor betrayed any fear of a US attack." This claim does not square with General Secretary Andropov's plea to Averell Harriman that the Reagan Administration "may be moving toward the dangerous 'red line'" of nuclear war, or with the two sources that told Jack Matlock that, "U.S.-Soviet relations [had] deteriorated to a dangerous point" and that Soviet officials were, "literally obsessed by fear of war." (See Part 1 of this series for both of these items.)

The SNIE also hypothesizes that the Soviets may have been using the alarm to "desensitize the United States to higher levels of Soviet military activity — thus masking intended future moves and reducing US warning time." The SNIE does not allow for the possibility — as Marshal Akhromeyev and Secretary of Defense Weinberger remarked — that the Soviet Union feared that Able Archer 83 could itself have masked a "ruse of war."

The final page of the SNIE acknowledged that the CIA had "inadequate information about ... the Soviet reading of our own military operations [and] current reconnaissance and exercises," but that notwithstanding these uncertainties the Soviets did not fear "an imminent military clash."



Side-by-side images from the CIA's Top Secret "Implications of Recent Soviet Military-Political Activities" (left) and a Secret 1984 State Department memo (right) reveal that the United States hid all references to Soviet reactions to Able Archer 83 in the report provided to their NATO allies.

Document 7: Department of State memo from Director of the Bureau of Intelligence and Research Hugh Montgomery to Secretary of State George Shultz, "Subject: SNIE 11-10-1984," May 28, 1984, Secret.

Source: Department of State Freedom of Information Act release.

A Department of State version of the SNIE produces further revelations. Although the copy of the cover-memo released to the National Security Archive was obscured by a highlighter (not redacted) and difficult to read, it has been deciphered and transcribed.

In the cover memo, INR Director Hugh Montgomery confirms that it was British intelligence (from its asset, Oleg Gordievsky), not American intelligence, that first reported the Soviet response to Able Archer 83: "You will recall that in response to British concerns, the intelligence community undertook a detailed review of recent Soviet military and political moves beginning with exercise Able Archer 83."

Montgomery then writes that sanitized versions of SNIE 11-10-1984 have been produced for release to the British and other NATO ministerial colleagues. The attached "sanitized version" -which is marked "Secret" rather than "Top Secret" — removes all references to Able Archer 83 and the Soviet response to it — despite the fact that British first reported it. These reports were likely provided to the

British in advance of Reagan's June 5, 1984 meeting with Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher and other officials at 10 Downing Street.
[2]

This deliberate omission to NATO allies that their nuclear release exercise may have spooked the Soviets (and the omission of a caveat about "inadequate information about ... the Soviet reading of our own military operations"^[3]) may be part of the reason why NATO Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe chief historian Gregory Pedlow reported that no senior participants in Exercise Able Archer 83 "recalled any 'war scare' or even unusual Soviet reaction to the exercise." It is also a reminder of how the U.S. classification system is used to hide information from strategic allies, as well as the American public.

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The Director of Central Intelligence

Washington, D.C. 20505

LR 84-2648

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19 June 1984

MEMORANDUM FOR: The President
The Vice President
Secretary of State
Secretary of Defense
Assistant to the President for
National Security Affairs
Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff

SUBJECT: US/Soviet Tension

25X1
EO 13526 3.3(b)(1)>25Yrs
EO 13526 3.5(c)

1. I attach here a rather stunning array of indicators of an increasing aggressiveness in Soviet policy and activities. These include developments in the media, civil defense sector, security operations, political harassment, logistical steps, the economy, intelligence preparations and political activity.

2. The depth and breadth of these activities demand increased and continual review to assess whether they are in preparation for a crisis or merely to embarrass or politically influence events in the United States.

3. In the light of the increasing number and accelerating tempo of developments of this type, we will shortly begin to produce a biweekly strategic warning report which will monitor and assess the implications of these incidents which we report on as they occur, but have not, thus far, pulled together in any systematic way.

/s/

William J. Casey

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MEMO CHURCH

CIA director William Casey's June 19, 1984, Secret report describes a "stunning array of indicators of an increasing aggressiveness in Soviet policy and activities."

Document 8: Central Intelligence Agency Memorandum for The President, Vice President, Secretary of State, Secretary of Defense, Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, from CIA Director William Casey, "US/Soviet Tension." June 19, 1984, Secret.

Source: Central Intelligence Agency Mandatory Declassification Review (MDR) release.

Six months after Able Archer 83, the Director of the CIA wrote to the highest levels of government, including the President, warning of "a

rather stunning array of indicators [primarily drawn from SNIE 11-10-1984] of an increasing aggressiveness in Soviet policy and activities."

While the majority of the section entitled "Military Activity" has been redacted by the CIA (and is under appeal by the National Security Archive), Casey's conclusion is unredacted. "The behavior of the armed forces is perhaps the most disturbing. From the operational deployment of submarines to the termination of harvest support to the delayed troop rotation there is a central theme of not being strategically vulnerable, even if it means taking some risks. It is important to distinguish in this category those acts which are political blustering and those which may be, but also carry large costs. The point of blustering is to do something that makes the opponent pay high costs while the blusterer pays none or little. The military behaviors we have observed involve high military costs ... adding thereby a dimension of genuineness to the Soviet expressions of concern that is often not reflected in intelligence issuances."

In other words, the Soviets might not be bluffing after all.

Document 9: Central Intelligence Agency Memorandum for Director of Central Intelligence William Casey from Fritz Ermarth and David McManis, "Contingency Talking Points on your Memo Entitled 'US-Soviet Tensions (dated 19 June 1984) for Meetings with Messieurs Shultz, Weinberger, and McFarlane," June 20, 1984, Secret.

Source: Central Intelligence Agency Freedom of Information Act release.

The day after Casey warned the President of "a rather stunning array of indicators" on Soviet behavior, the chief authors of the SNIE that contained these indicators wrote the director suggesting that he walk back the thrust of his memo and report. They suggested that he tell interlocutors, "It was not my intent in sending you the memo to suggest there was any immediate danger of hostile Soviet action" and that the CIA's "best judgment ... remains that expressed in our recent SNIE ... that we do not believe the Soviet leadership either fears imminent conflict or is making preparations for an imminent move

toward confrontation."

Nonetheless, in response to these indicators, the CIA began to produce Strategic Warning Reports on a regular basis, which would "identify emerging strategic trends of more than normal concern to us."

Document 10: June 14, 1984 Diary Entry by Ronald Reagan. Some information excised by request of the National Security Council.

Source: Ronald Reagan, ed. Douglas Brinkley, *The Reagan Diaries: Volume 1: January 1981-October 1985*, Unabridged, (New York: Harper Collins, 2009).

This debate did reach President Reagan. He synthesized the essence of it in his journal on June 14, 1984, five days before the dueling CIA memos: "... A meeting with Geo. S & Bud [Secretary of State George Shultz and National Security Advisor Robert McFarlane]. We dug into the subject of a meeting with [new General Secretary of the Soviet Union Konstantin] Chernenko. I have a gut feeling we should do this. His reply to my letter is in hand and it lends support to my idea that while we go on believing, & with some good reason, that the Soviets are plotting against us & mean us harm, maybe they are scared of us & think we are a threat. I'd like to go face to face & explore this with them."

Document 11: Central Intelligence Agency, Special National Intelligence Estimate 11-9-84, "Soviet Policy Toward the United States in 1984," Undated but circa August 1984, Top Secret.

Source: Central Intelligence Agency online FOIA reading room.

This August 1984 SNIE reiterates the points made in the earlier May 1984 estimate that "Soviet actions are not inspired by, and Soviet leaders do not perceive, a genuine danger of imminent conflict or confrontation with the United States. Also, we do not believe that Soviet war talk and other actions 'mask' Soviet preparations for an imminent move toward confrontation on the part of the USSR."

The SNIE did not analyze the danger of nuclear war through miscalculation, but concluded it "highly unlikely" that the USSR would "instigate an acute central confrontation ... on the order of the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962" to achieve political objectives. Instead, the SNIE postulated that reported "Soviet fears of impending war" could be a ploy to lure the United States into a smaller scale confrontation (perhaps in the Middle East) which the Soviets would exploit for larger geostrategic gain."

The SNIE also repeats the claim that Soviet "diplomatic communications have displayed neither the tone of alarm nor belligerence generated in their official propaganda."[4]

Document

**12: July
21, 1987
and
August 5,
1987
Diary
Entries by
Ronald
Reagan.
Some**



A C-130 landing during Autumn Forge 83. From *Air Man*.

information excised by request of the National Security Council.

Source: Ronald Reagan, ed. Douglas Brinkley, *The Reagan Diaries: Volume 1: January 1981-October 1985*, Unabridged, (New York: Harper Collins, 2009).

On July 21, 1987, President Reagan met with Oleg Gordievsky, the Soviet double agent who was MI6's prime source of War Scare information. Reagan recorded in his journal, "this morning had a meeting with Col. Oleg Antonvich Gordiyevskiy — the Soviet K.G.B. officer who defected to Eng. His wife & 2 little girls were left behind. We've been trying to get them out to join him."

Two weeks later, Gordievsky again appears in the president's journal. "Then [I read] a report on Col. Oleg Gordiaskiy — the K.G.B.

defector to Eng. Margaret Thatcher is working on the Soviets as we are. We're going to hold back & see if she can get his wife & 2 children out of Russia."

Gordievsky, whom the KGB correctly suspected was working as a double agent was abruptly recalled to Moscow and placed under surveillance in May of 1985. That September, he escaped across the Finnish border and defected to the United Kingdom. He was reunited with his wife and daughters in September, 1991.

Document 13: Don Oberdorfer Interview with former [redacted] hand, at [the Hotel] Madison, May 22, 1990.

Source: Princeton University, Mudd Manuscript Library, Don Oberdorfer Papers 1983-1990, Series 3, Research Documents Files.

The most comprehensive known U.S. government evaluation of the War Scare is a 110-page report produced by the President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board (PFIAB) and authored by Nina Stewart. It was completed on February 15, 1990, and forwarded to President George H.W. Bush. Despite the public historical debate over the 1983 War Scare, declassification of other War Scare documents, and repeated FOIA and MDR requests (dating back to 2006) for the document, this illuminating PFIAB report remains locked from public view, a victim of our nation's broken declassification system. ^[5]

The document's existence was revealed by *Washington Post* journalist Don Oberdorfer in his 1991 book *The Turn: From the Cold War to a New Era* ^[6]; and although it remains officially classified, Oberdorfer's papers contain an extremely revealing, previously unpublished summary of the PFIAB's analysis. According to Oberdorfer's source:

The SNIEs of May and August 1984 "essentially reached [the] conclusion that the war scare of 1983-4 was part of a Soviet propaganda campaign designed [to] intimidate the US, deter it from deploying improved weapons, [and] arouse opposition in US and Western Europe to US foreign policy objectives. If so, not of crucial significance."

Another conclusion, "not adopted at the time but closer to the retrospective view of the PFIAB, [was] that [the] war scare was an expression of a genuine belief on the part of Soviet leaders that US was planning a nuclear first strike, causing Sov[iet] military to prepare for this eventuality, for example by readying forces for a Sov[iet] preemptive strike. If so, war scare a cause for concern."

To reach these conclusions, the PFIAB report relied on evidence including U.S. knowledge that the Soviets "had mounted a huge collection effort to find out what Amer[icans] were actually doing" (Operation RYaN), and that "they were taking actions to be able to sustain a surprise attack, especially increased protection for their leadership in view of reduced warning time of [Pershing IIs]," which included improved bunkers and special communications. The PFIAB summary also confirmed the May SNIE's report that the Soviets placed nuclear strike capable "aircraft in Germany and Poland on a higher alert status." This "ominous list of indicators" continued to be pertinent until early 1984.

The summary of the PFIAB report also contains additional information about Oleg Gordievsky. It claims that he reported that the Soviets "had set up a large computer model in the Min[istry] of Defense to calculate and monitor the correlation of forces, including mili[tary], economy, [and] psychological factors, to assign numbers and relative weights."

Gordievsky's information, according to the PFIAB summary, "was very closely held at the time but there was some consciousness at [the] top of the general upshot of it." (See the description of Document 7.)

Document 14: Memoirs of President Reagan

Source: Ronald Reagan, *An American Life: The Autobiography*, (New York: Simon & Shuster, 1990), 588-589.

In his memoirs, President Reagan reflects on the 1983 War Scare without mentioning specifics (he states earlier in the book that he cannot mention classified information). He writes of his realization, informed no doubt by the arguments and counterarguments of his intelligence community:

"Three years had taught me something surprising about the Russians: Many people at the top of the Soviet hierarchy were genuinely afraid of America and Americans. Perhaps this shouldn't have surprised me, but it did

"During my first years in Washington, I think many of us in the administration took it for granted that the Russians, like ourselves considered it unthinkable that the United States would launch a first strike against them. But the more experience I had with Soviet leaders and other heads of state who knew them, the more I began to realize that many Soviet officials feared us not only as adversaries but as potential aggressors who might hurl nuclear weapons at them in a first strike; because of this ... they had aimed a huge arsenal of nuclear weapons at us.

" Well, if that was the case, I was even more anxious to get a top Soviet leader in a room alone and try and convince him we had no designs on the Soviet Union and Russians had nothing to fear from us."

NOTES

[1] Robert McFarlane interview conducted by author, April 22, 2009.

[2] Ronald Reagan, *The Reagan Diaries Unabridged: Volume 1: January 1981-October 1985*, edited by Douglass Brinkley, (New York: HarperCollins, 2009), 354.

[3] The Department of State did not do a particularly good job sanitizing this information. The sanitized SNIE states that there are "three main sources of uncertainty" but lists only two sources, revealing to a careful reader that information had been removed.

[4] According to *The Storm Birds: Soviet Post War Defectors*, written in 1989 by Gordon Brook-Shepherd, "In September and October 1985, British's officials passed Gordievsk[y]'s information on the Ryan exercise to the Americans, including his detailed analysis not merely of the Kremlin's strategy but of the Kremlin's psychology as it affected that strategy. This paper, entitled 'Soviet Perceptions of Nuclear Warfare,' was fifty pages long ... President Reagan was said to have

read these Gordievsk[y] reports from beginning to end, which was far from being his standard practice." Although Mandatory Review requests for this document have not been fulfilled, the Department of Defense has released a document produced circa 1979 with the same title, which states that according to Soviet perceptions, "a new World War will be unleashed by the imperialists [the United States] ... [and a] surprise attack is most likely. Therefore, primary task is to be constantly ready to reliably repulse a surprise attack of the imperialists."

[5] See Footnote 12 in the previous posting in this series:
http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB427/#_ftn12

[6] Don Oberdorfer, *The Turn: From the Cold War To a New Era*, (New York: Touchstone, 1991), 67.

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